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VESTIGES

OF

ANCIENT MANNERS AND CUSTOMS,

DISCOVERABLE IN

MODERN ITALY AND SICILY.

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VESTIGES

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ANCIENT MANNERS AND CUSTOMS,

DISCOVERABLE IN

MODERN ITALY AND SICILY.

37779

BY THE REV. JOHN JAMES BLUNT,

FELLOW OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE; AND LATE ONE OF THE TRAVELLING BACHELORS OF THAT UNIVERSITY.

NN-C

Mos unde deductus per omne
Tempus. HOR.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.

1823.

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TO

THE MOST NOBLE

THE MARQUESS OF STAFFORD,

THE FOLLOWING PAGES

ARE RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

IN GRATITUDE

FOR THOSE SUBSTANTIAL ACTS OF KINDNESS,

WHICH THE AUTHOR'S FAMILY

HAS EXPERIENCED

FROM

THE HOUSE OF TRENTHAM.

PREFACE.

A TITLE-PAGE is seldom sufficient to put a reader in possession of an author's views, much less to guard him against misinterpreting them. I trust therefore that I may be allowed to state in this place what mine are in the following pages, and what they are not; and this I will do in as few words as possible. In a tour through Italy and Sicily, which I made in the years 1818 and 1819, my attention was very soon drawn to clear indications of ancient manners and customs which occasionally presented them-

selves to my notice. I entered them in my journal as they occurred; and finding them numerous beyond my expectation, and moreover receiving much amusement from the detection of them, I was led, both in holding intercourse with the living, and in inspecting the relics of generations past, to keep the subject constantly in sight. The observations which I thus made I had an opportunity of correcting and augmenting by a second visit to Italy in the years 1820 and 1821; during which latter period I resided for some months in a native family, for the purpose of prosecuting my plan with greater advantage. The result has been the little book that is here offered to the public; to which, though popular spectacles, agriculture, domestic economy, and other topics, furnish their contin-

gent, yet the religion of Italy and Sicily certainly occupies a very prominent place in it; not from any superior anxiety on my part to discover points of similarity between pagan and Christian times under this department of my subject, but from the intimate and visible union which the forms of religion maintain with all the events of private life in those countries. It is to protect myself from any charge of illiberality in what I have to say under this head, that I have been induced to write this short preface; afraid lest that should be taken for a polemical, which was only intended for a literary essay. I feel the more desirous that this should be clearly understood, because otherwise it might be supposed that I am about to renew the warfare against the church of Rome, which Dr. Middleton waged so

vigorously in his celebrated 'Letter.' My present aim is perfectly distinct from his. I mean no attack upon that church; and if I were to attack it, I should do so on more general, and, as I conceive, stronger grounds. I have lived much amongst its members, and have experienced from them many personal civilities. That their faith is erroneous, of course I believe; but I believe that the faith of him who would oppose it with uncharitable bitterness and invective, is no less so. In tracing, however, the vestiges of a classical age which still exist in Italy and Sicily, it is impossible not frequently to refer to the rites and ceremonies of paganism, or to avoid remarking the close connexion which they often have with those at present in use. Many such customs are in-

nocent in themselves, and therefore may be retained by the church of Italy without censure. Some few are more than innocent, they are meritorious, and therefore may be retained with praise. But others, it must be confessed, and those no small class either, are unquestionably superstitious and idolatrous, and therefore ought to be abolished. Of this the *enlightened* Romanist himself is no less conscious than those who hold the reformed faith; for he cannot defend, nor do I think he would be desirous of attempting it, the gross abuses which fraud or credulity or inveterate custom has engrafted upon the fundamental tenets of his church. Many of these abuses, however, it was necessary to introduce in order to complete my picture; nor had I any reason for passing over unnoticed ob-

jects which are familiar to all who travel through Italy. Where I have discovered then any points of conformity between the religion of ancient and modern Rome, I have fearlessly mentioned them, as I would mention any points of conformity between the houses or streets; neither have I denied myself the full liberty of expressing my own opinion upon their character and propriety. Thus much for the religious portion of my essay.

Of the remainder it is unnecessary for me to speak, because it is not liable to the same misconception. I shall only add, that Dr. Middleton, in the work which I have already named, though with a different object, has pre-occupied a part of my field of inquiry: The coincidences, therefore, between ancient and modern religious rites in Italy, which

he has examined with characteristic learning and asperity, I have omitted, except in such cases as allowed further illustration, and where I thought that I had the means of affording it. And though it is true that these coincidences are some of the most striking and satisfactory; because the most obvious of all, yet has that distinguished writer left a plentiful gleaning to those who should come after him; particularly possessed as they now are of sources of information which were not open to him, the extensive excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum.

Having said this, I put myself into the hands of my reader; not indeed expecting that he can derive as much gratification from the perusal of my book as I have felt in collecting the materials for

it; but at least hoping, that he will be as indulgent towards its defects, as I have been careful, both by repeatedly examining it for myself, and by listening to the suggestions of friends eminently qualified for advising me, to render those defects as few and as inconsiderable as I was able.

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VESTIGES

OF

ANCIENT MANNERS AND CUSTOMS,

&c. &c.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON THE RELIGION OF ITALY AND SICILY.

As I descended from the Alps, I was admonished of my entrance into Italy, by a little chapel to the Madonna, built upon a rock by the road-side; and from that time till I repassed this chain of mountains, I received almost hourly proof that I was wandering amongst the descendants of that people which is described by Cicero to have been the most

religious of mankind. Though the mixture of religion with all the common events of life is any thing but an error, yet I could not avoid regretting that, like their heathen ancestors, the modern Italians had supplied the place of one great Master-mover by a countless host of inferior agents. The multiplication of gods, in the first instance, may seem to have arisen from the incorrect idea which unassisted reason was likely to form of the Deity, by transferring to the powers of the unseen world the same qualities and imperfections which belong to the noblest of visible animals—the passions and infirmities of helpless man. For as the human individual can but accomplish a limited number of actions; limited by his disposition to do good or evil; by his bodily and mental capacities; by space and time; so did it become necessary that the gods, who were thought to labour under the same difficulties, though not in the same degree, should be proportionally multiplied. Thus

to one was ascribed the blight of a crop; to another its increase: one was vested with the empire of the winds, another with that of the waves: to one were assigned the phenomena of fire; to a second those of vegetation; to a third those of war. Nay, even a fever or a cough were made subjects of apotheosis.

But in proportion to the number of these new divinities, and the subdivision of their power and functions, their supposed elevation above the rank and condition of mankind grew less. Mankind grew less afraid of applying to them for trifles; and suitable engines of importunity, oblations, ornaments, and pecuniary presents to themselves or their accredited servants, became the recognised and usual way of seeking for those worldly favours which, except in general terms, and with much doubt and self-submission, none should venture to solicit from the great God and Sovereign of the universe.

To this natural progress of erroneous belief

the craft of man contributed. Amongst the heathens every shrine had its priest; and as these priests were generally maintained by the offerings brought to the altars of their respective Patrons, they of course became deeply pledged to uphold a system which furnished them with the means of subsistence, if not of profusion.

It is lamentable to observe in how many particulars this picture is true of modern Italy and Sicily; where, in spite of that knowledge of the one and only God which revelation has communicated, the same tendency to polytheism (for the worship of saints has all the character of that creed in practice, however ingeniously it may be explained), is still manifested; and where the same abuses as those which have been already enumerated, and from the same causes, abundantly prevail. On the one hand, impertinent and unworthy solicitations of divine interference; on the other, encouragement in such a practice by

self-interested individuals. Priests ill-paid, and hordes of friars, mendicants by profession, have been tempted to lay under heavy contribution the credulity of the public; and accordingly we find most cathedrals, as well as nearly all the chapels of the regular clergy, possessed of images or relics said to be endowed with miraculous virtues, while a box is at hand to receive the offerings of those who, out of gratitude for the past, or hope for the future, are disposed to give their mite for the good of the church. I have seen the poor fishermen at Catania regularly greeted on their arrival at the coast with the produce of their day's toil, by the craving voice of a Capuchin or Franciscan; nor has that been refused to the holy vagrant which ordinary beggars, though wrung with distress, would have besought in vain. Indeed few persons are so poor as to escape subscribing their quota towards filling the satchels of these men, or

so fearless of the consequent anger of Heaven as to risk a denial.

The general effects of this unhappy system have been, to degrade the worship of the Deity—to swell the calendar with saints—to extend the influence of charms—to instigate pilgrimages—to clothe the altars with votive tablets—and to give currency to numbers of miracles which have not a shadow of testimony to their truth. In short, it has made the countries of Italy and Sicily what they are, emblems of the churches in them, replete themselves with beauty, yet serving as vast magazines for objects calculated to excite the devotion of the superstitious; the pity of the wise and good; and the scoffs of the profane.

CHAPTER II.

OF SAINTS.

WITH these prefatory remarks, tending to explain the principle which seems ever to have influenced the religious system of Italy, and also to connect the details which it will be the business of several of the subsequent chapters to recount, I proceed to call my reader's attention to the points of conformity which I have observed between the ceremonies of the ancient religion and those now practised in Italy and Sicily. To begin then with a very fertile subject—the Saints. If we consider their numbers, their reputed lives, the places and objects over which they preside, their miraculous powers, together with some other circumstances relating to them, we shall find in them a wonderful resemblance to the gods of old Rome.

It was a complaint made by the Roman satirist, that deities had been so much multiplied as to become a burden to Atlas almost greater than he could bear. (*Juv. Sat.* 13. 46.) Hence that enormous profusion of temples and altars with which the towns of ancient Italy abounded; whilst the country was filled with chapels to the rural powers, not less numerous than those now erected in like situations to a saint or a Madonna. Indeed, they seem to have been no uncommon places of shelter for the shepherds and their flocks.

> Da veniam culpæ, (exclaims one of them), nec dum degrandinat, obsit,
> Agresti fano supposuisse pecus.
>
> Ov. Fast. iv. 755.

> Forgive the crime, if midst the wintry rain,
> My flock I've shelter'd in thy rustic fane.

Hence too, that extraordinary catalogue of festivals which ever have been, and which still continue to be, destructive of all habits of industry in these countries. The serious ill-effects which result from this cause, must

have come under the notice of every traveller; and so convinced was Augustus heretofore of the same truth, that he abolished thirty of the number, in order that fewer interruptions might be given to the administration of justice.—(*Sueton. Aug.* § 32.) Agriculture, too, as might have been expected, suffered severely under their baneful influence; and therefore it is, that Virgil endeavours to meet the scruples of the farmer, by pointing out certain occupations in husbandry, which it was lawful to exercise at all seasons.

> Quippe etiam festis quædam exercere diebus
> Fas et jura sinunt; rivos deducere nulla
> Religio vetuit, &c.
>
> GEORG. i. 268.

> Even holidays and feasts permission yield,
> The meads to water, and to fence the field,
> To fire the brambles, &c.
>
> *Dryden's Translat.*

But further, if the saints by their multitude furnish one parallel to the old deities; by their reputed lives, they afford another equally striking.

When I observed such a preamble to a prayer as this, printed and publicly suspended in a Christian church, "O most glorious Virgin, Sa. Rosolia, who, fired by the love of thy heavenly spouse (Christ), abandonedst the comforts of thy father's house, and the pleasures of a court, to live with him in the narrow cavern of Quisquilina, and the savage den of Monte Pellegrino," &c.: when I read such verses as these upon the same tablet,

SCENE.—*The Cavern of Monte Pellegrino.*

Locum intras tenebrosum;
Nec te piget luminosum
Vultum solis non videre;
Nempe Christo vis placere.
In hâc cellâ Peregrina,
Terram calcas, et divina
Meditando, supernorum
Socia fis habitatorum.
Nunc te liliis, nunc te rosis,
Sponsus ornat odorosis;
Nunc apostolos miraris,
Nunc Mariam contemplaris, &c.

In Pellegrino's gloomy cell,
For Christ thou bid'st the world farewell;
And musing there in heavenly love,
Hold'st converse with the powers above.
To deck that brow thy spouse bestows
A lily here, and there a rose;
While stand confess'd before thy view,
Our Lady and the apostles too.

When in a consecrated room annexed to the chapel of S. Catharine at Sienna, I found it recorded upon a similar tablet, "that in that house S. Catharine one day felt an amorous longing, (*amorose smanie*), to see her divine husband; that two very beautiful angels appeared to her to comfort her; but that she turning to them said, 'it is not you I want, but him who created you,'" &c.: when in the same manner I saw it proclaimed, "that under that roof she had been married to Jesus Christ on the day of the carnival, in the presence of the most blessed Virgin Mary, of King David, who played upon the harp, of St. John the Evangelist, of St. Paul and St. Dominic:" when on entering the church

of Sa. Rosa at Viterbo, I discovered an altar adorned with such blasphemy as the following:

"Quis tamen laudes recolat, quis hujus
Virginis dotes, sibi quam pudicis
Nuptiis junctam voluit superni
Numen Olympi?"

But ah! what powers of tongue can paint,
The virtues of this virgin saint?
For whom, a chaste, celestial bride,
The ruler of Olympus sigh'd.

When I witnessed all this, I say, I could not prevent my mind from wandering to the interviews between Diana and Endymion; between Bacchus and Ariadne; between Venus and Adonis; between Jupiter, Apollo, in short, half the heathen gods, and as many favored mortals, whose names afterwards became emblazoned in the scrolls of mythology. It is remarkable, too, that the sex of the parties is as carefully adjusted in the former, as in the latter instances.

In the places and things over which the gods

and the saints have been alike made to preside, a third parallel is discovered. It would be endless to reckon up the mountains which were thought to be the resort of particular deities. Jupiter Latialis had a favourite seat on the Alban Mount; he had another on the promontory of Anxur. Faunus often quitted Lycæus for Lucretilis. Indeed Juvenal speaks of the hilly country as the ordinary retreat of the gods:

> Quis tamen affirmet nil actum in montibus, aut in Speluncis? adeo senuerunt Jupiter et Mars.
>
> SAT. vi. 69.

> The gods have oft, in other times, we're told,
> With nymphs on *mountains* and in caves made bold;
> And still, perhaps, they may not be too old.
>
> GIFFORD*.

The prejudice then in favour of the sanctity of high places, continues in undiminished

* To adapt it to my purpose, I have ventured to make a slight alteration in Mr. Gifford's translation of this passage.

force. On the summit of one of the chief heights near Leghorn, is the chapel of the Madonna del Monte Nero, famous amongst all classes for the miracles she performs; but particularly amongst the sailors. Near Bologna, on the brow of a very steep hill, stands the church of the Madonna di S. Luca, of so much note that it has been connected with the town by one of the longest and handsomest cloisters in Italy. Near Vicenza is a chapel of the Virgine del Monte, similarly situated, and also approached by an arcade of great extent. The sacellum of Sa. Rosolia at Palermo is built on a mountain, the altitude and commanding position of which caused it to be selected by Lord Nelson for a telegraph station. Indeed, whoever will inquire of the peasants the names of the hills amongst which he may happen to be wandering, will not fail to find some sacred appellation assigned to three out of four. One will be Sa. Croce; another S. Paolo; a thrid S. Giovanni; a fourth S. Quirico. By this

last saint, Mount Eryx, in common with many more, has been deprived of its ancient designation: and the old god, thus pushed from his stool by modern usurpation, may reasonably complain in the words of the poet,

> Ubi nunc nobis Deus ille magister
> Nequicquam memoratus Eryx?

> Where is our Eryx now, the boasted name,
> The God who taught your thundering arm the game?
> DRYDEN.

Again, Fountains were no less under the protection of the gods, and such as had medicinal qualities, were supposed to derive their salutary powers from the interference of the deity who presided over them. Proofs of their sacred character abound in almost every page of classical authors. It may suffice to mention the fountain of Bandusia, to which the Poet promises the sacrifice of a kid; or that of Egeria, where Umbricius laments that the divinity of the spring should have been insulted with a barbarous profusion of orna-

mental marble, to the expulsion of her native turf and gravel. Further, the Temple of Serapis at Puzzuoli was an hospital of invalids, and was erected there on account of the warm and mineral waters which the place affords. In the Villa Academia of Cicero, in the same neighbourhood, a warm fountain, possessed of properties very beneficial to the eyes, is said to have issued forth immediately after his death. The circumstance is recorded in verse, by Laurea Tullius, one of his freedmen, who accounts for a phenomenon so extraordinary, from its connexion with the great orator. (*Plin. N. H.* 31. § 2.)

This prejudice in favour of the sanctity of Fountains also still continues. I have seen a tablet fixed over one in which an indulgence was proclaimed to such as would there repeat an Ave Maria. At the three fountains a couple of miles distant from Rome, said to have sprung from the ground when St. Paul's head rebounded as many times after his decapitation, there are three churches; whilst

the waters called by the early Christians the Aquæ Salviæ, are thought to have favourable effects on the constitution, no doubt through the intervention of St. Paul. At Sciacca in Sicily there are some natural vapour baths, caused by a steam proceeding from a cavern in the mountain of S. Calogero. The cures performed there in cases of rheumatism and the like, are of course imputed to Santo Calogero himself, who, it seems, was sent into Sicily by St. Peter to check a disease which was ravaging the country, and to that end he produced this Stufa. At the foot of the same hill are some sulphureous fountains, which raise the thermometer to 137°, and near them a saline spring 87° in temperature. Here again is a small chapel, filled, like that of St. Peter's Friend, with crutches and other votive offerings, and dedicated to the Madonna degli Ammalati, who is the Numen Aquæ of the bath, as the other is of the vapour.

In illustrating the subject of the Numina

Aquæ, I have been led to encroach a little upon the head to which it is now my intention to advert. The various *supernatural powers* with which the saints of the Italians and gods of the Romans have been respectively endowed, furnish a fourth parallel.

In the monkish rhymes which hang near the altar of S. Rosolia at Palermo, she is besought to protect her favourite city from earthquake, pestilence, and war:

Nunc, o Virgo gloriosa,
Candens lilium, rubens rosa,
Audi preces, audi vota
Quæ profundit gens devota—
Terræmotum, pestem, bellum,
Procul pelle; nec flagellum
Appropinquet civitati,
Quæ tuæ fidit pietati.

Virgin, modest as the rose,
Fairer than the lily's snows,
Listen whilst our lips disclose
A nation's prayer—
Nature's scourges banish hence,
Earthquake, battle, pestilence;
Or grant us but thy firm defence,
And come what dare.

How little does this strain of supplication differ from that of propitiation addressed by Horace to Apollo:

> Hic bellum lacrymosum, hic miseram famem,
> Pestemque a populo, et Principe Cæsare, in
> Persas atque Britannos,
> Vestrâ motus aget prece.
>
> Moved by your prayer, the god of day
> Seconds a bounteous Cæsar's sway;
> And famine gaunt, and noisome pest,
> And murderous war with tear-steep'd crest,
> Chases from Rome, to curse and spoil
> A British or a Persian soil.

In a street at Naples I remarked a statue to S. Cajetanus, with an inscription purporting that he had delivered that town from the plague. In the same place I remember seeing a shrine fixed to the side of a house, which, by its profusion of ornaments, and more than common attractions that it appeared to possess, induced me to approach and examine it. From a tablet near it, I learned, that many years ago the devil had been doing a great

deal of mischief in the vicinity of Naples, under the shape of a sow. Application was made to a certain Saint Petronius, to put him to flight. He went to bed, saw the Virgin in a vision, was ordered by her to found a church on a particular spot which she described, and was promised for his reward that the devil should commit these ravages no more. With this advice he complied, and thus the Neapolitans were rescued from the sow. Now, when proper allowance is made for the spiritual arms with which alone it is usual to array the saints, there is very little difference between this tale and that of Hercules and the Erymanthian Boar.

I was informed by a gentleman at Rome that there is now in the Villa Bracciano, near Frascati, a statue of Æsculapius, to which persons labouring under sickness repair, embrace its knees, and feel confident that their application will be attended with benefit. As I did not see it, however, I am unable to say

what saint has taken possession of this representative of the god of medicine.

Having now found, that in their numbers, their reputed lives, their favourite places of resort, and their supernatural powers, the modern saints and ancient gods have many points in common, it remains to notice the several ways in which the figures of both have been employed by a superstitious people, as Lares, Dii Tutelares, charms, and the like.

I. The first division of Lares of which I shall speak, consists of those that were fixed in the public streets, particularly in situations where several ways met, and where the conflux of the populace was consequently greater. These were called Viales or Compitales, and the festival observed in honour of them Ludi Compitalicii. I think it not unlikely that the Priapus in the principal street at Pompeii, of which so much has been said, was one of these Lares Viales. By a decree of Augustus they were annually adorned with spring and summer

flowers. (*Sueton. Aug.* 31.) In the towns of Italy and Sicily, then, there are at this moment few streets which cannot display at least one Madonna, situated also in general after the ancient manner, at their points of intersection, entitled therefore to the name of Compitalis, and commonly decorated with garlands and bouquets. I recollect having seen in Sicily a few withered ears of corn placed in the hand and wreathed round the brow of a Madonna Vialis; a trifling circumstance in itself, but such as could not fail, at all events in that island, to suggest that such were the legitimate ornaments of the goddess who once held there undisputed empire:

> Tum demum vultumque Ceres animumque reponit,
> Imposuitque suæ spicea serta comæ.
>
> OVID. Fast. iv. 616.

> With this was Ceres cheer'd and comforted,
> And put a corn-ear'd garland on her head.
>
> *Gower's Translation.*

Around these objects of reverence little

groups of persons daily assemble to sing their vespers; and for a month before Christmas, peasants, principally from Calabria, come trooping into the towns with their pipes, on which they play gratuitously a simple air before every Madonna Compitalis, and regale those also within doors for a few baiochs, which the piety of the poorest housekeeper urges him to spend:

> Ante Deûm matrem cornu Tibicen adunco
> Cum canit, exiguæ quis stipis æra neget?
> OVID. Ep. i. 1. 11.

> When to the mighty Mother pipes the swain,
> Grudge not a trifle for his pious strain.

I am thus circumstantial, because from the passage which I have just quoted, as well as from numberless others, it is perfectly known that the Romans used to sing to the images of their gods, and that the Tibia was more especially consecrated to their service. (Vid. *Ovid. Fast.* vi. 652.)

A word with respect to these pipes. They

are of two kinds; the one of a very simple construction, in shape resembling our flageolet, with six holes, but without keys; in short, neither more nor less than the old Tibia, as it is preserved in many antique pieces of sculpture. The other is a somewhat more complex instrument. It consists of a tube through which the musician inflates a goat-skin that he holds under his left arm. Two pipes of unequal length (Tibiæ impares) communicate with this skin by a single mouth; the shorter serving for a drone or continued bass, and admitting, I think, only one variety of modulation; the longer having three or four apertures. This rustic performer probably differs little from the Utricularius of the ancients.

II. The next purpose for which figures of the gods were employed, was to guard the entrances of houses: accordingly statues of Janus, of Cardea, of Forculus, were fixed near the doors. (*Pitiscus verb.* '*fores*,' *Macrob. Sat.*

1. 9.) And still a niche, occupied by a saint or Madonna, is generally seen on each side the great gate by which the house of an Italian is approached. I observed this to be particularly the case in the neighbourhood of Bologna.

III. Thirdly, the prodigious number of small images and household gods which are still in existence, shows the extent to which they were adopted in the domestic system of the Romans: for them a corner was reserved in their principal living rooms; and I scarcely remember a single house or shop in Pompeii in which there is not a niche for their reception. To this day then, the shops and houses of Italy and Sicily are no less scrupulously provided with a figure or painting of a Madonna or saint; whose good offices it is not unusual further to propitiate, by keeping a lamp burning before them without intermission.

IV. Another province which the Penates

had to fill, was that of guarding the chamber and bed from the influence of evil spirits by night. In this capacity they were called *Dii cubiculares*, and had a station assigned them near the couch. Such was that which those of Æneas occupied when they addressed themselves to him, and commanded him to quit Crete.

Nox erat, et terris animalia somnus habebat:
Effigies sacræ Divûm, Phrygiique Penates,
Quos mecum a Trojâ, mediisque ex ignibus urbis
Extuleram, visi ante oculos astare jacentis
In somnis, multo manifesti lumine; qua se
Plena per insertas fundebat Luna fenestras.

Æn. iii. 148-52.

'Twas night, when every creature void of cares,
The common gift of balmy slumber shares:
The statues of my gods, for such they seem'd,
Those gods whom I from flaming Troy redeem'd,
Before me stood; majestically bright,
Full in the beams of Phœbe's entering light.

DRYDEN.

The extraordinary majority in numbers which the Priapi seem to have had above all other

household gods, is perhaps attributable to their having been used more than the rest as *Dii cubiculares.*

In whatever profusion, however, these little idols decorated the chambers of the Romans, I have no scruple in asserting, that the saints devoted to the same purpose at present, in Italy and Sicily, are not at all less plentiful. Whoever has walked through the wards of an Italian hospital, may probably have observed that there is not a single bed near which, in addition to the crucifix, we do not see posted upon the wall, one or more pictures of a favourite saint. The same is the case in private houses. I remember counting ten such effigies at a bed's-head in a house at Marsala. Indeed, in a palace of the king of Naples, and by the side of his majesty's pillow, I found a small ill-executed print, representing the present Pope, in the act of calming a storm on one of his passages from Leghorn to Genoa. Neither are pictures alone thus employed.—

Images of clay, painted with the brightest possible colours, and a good deal resembling those which the Italians may be often found carrying about for sale in this country, serve the turn equally well; and I have seen St. Roch, figuring in a military cloak and Hessian boots, between our Saviour and the Virgin in this cubicular service.

It may be worth while to add, that the mixture of sacred and profane images thus used in the early ages of the church, marks the transition of the ancient into the present practice. From Augustin (*de Hæres.* § 7.) it appears, that a certain woman named Marcellina, a disciple of Carpocrates the heretic, offered adorations and incense to Jesus and Paul, and Homer and Pythagoras: and Alexander Severus is reported to have reckoned amongst his household gods, Apollonius and Christ, and Abraham and Orpheus. (*Lamprid. Vit. Alex. Sev.* c. 29.) Neither can it be objected, that the present custom

differs from that of Pagan times, inasmuch as small paintings, as well as figures of solid material, are employed for Lares. True it is, that most of the specimens of these objects of heathen worship which have been preserved to our own days, are of the latter description; but it is certain that pictures also were used for the same purpose; the perishable nature of which has alone prevented them from being now generally found in Museums.—However, we learn, from Juvenal, that the goddess Epona was painted on the stalls of the stables.

Jurat
Solam Eponam, et facies olida ad præsepia pictas.
Sat. viii. 157.

On Epona with oaths the stripling calls,
And hails her image painted on the stalls.

Moreover in a small chapel now exhibited in the museum at Portici, and discovered in a private house at Pompeii, besides the bronze

figures of Priapus, to whom it is supposed to have been dedicated by some female of the family cursed with sterility, the wall opposite the entrance is painted with the forms of Isis, Osiris, and Anubis.

V. A fifth great purpose for which effigies of the gods served, was the protection of shipping.

Of these *Dii Tutelares*, Horace does not forget the mention in his catalogue of the ship's furniture. In proving her to be not sea-worthy, he is not satisfied with showing that her oars are lost, her mast shattered, her cables rotten, her sails rent, but the gods too, who might have been invoked in distress, had been washed away in the storm.

Non Dii quos iterum pressa voces malo.

The passage is very properly illustrated by a reference to Persius, who in describing the disastrous shipwreck of the miserly merchant,

represents him cast ashore, together with the gods which the tempest had dashed from the stern—

'Jacet ipse in littore, et unà
Ingentes de puppe Dii.'

6. 30.

From the casual manner in which these insignia are mentioned by Ovid, in his narrative of the foul weather which he encountered on the voyage to the place of his exile, it may be fairly inferred that they formed an established part of a Roman ship:

Me miserum, (says he), quantis increscunt æquora ventis;
Erutaque ex imis fervet arena vadis!
Monte nec inferior proræ puppique recurvæ
Insilit, et pictos verberat unda Deos.

Trist. 1. 3. 110.

O'er the rough sea the madd'ning tempests sweep,
The sand in eddies rushes from the deep,
Leaps the huge mountain-wave o'er stern and prow,
And lashes fierce the painted gods below.

Indeed, it seems probable that vessels took their names from their tutelar deities; and consequently, that they were of a sacred cha-

racter: accordingly the boat in Catullus is dedicated before sailing to Castor and Pollux.

> Seque dedicat tibi,
> Gemelle Castor, et gemelle Castoris.
> *Ded. phasel.* 1, 4. 36.

And St. Paul sailed from Melite to Puteoli in a ship 'whose sign was Castor and Pollux.' (*Acts* xxviii. 11.) Now to this day the names of the vessels belonging to the ports of Italy and Sicily are almost invariably sacred; and at Messina or Naples may be seen the Swift, the Dart, the Enterprise, or the Wellington, from Liverpool, lying beside the Santa Elizabeta, the Santa Maria della Providenza, the Santissimo Core di Jesu, &c. with corresponding figures conspicuous on the prow. At the same time in the cabins of these latter will be found a Madonna or a saint in wax, wood, or paper, with a lamp suspended before it. In Sicily the smallest boat which is paddled along-shore by a fisherman or porter, would be thought not more ill-appointed without an

oar, than without a guardian angel for insurance against calamity. A friend of mine who, in conjunction with some others, had hired a sparonara to convey them from Naples to Rome, (communication by land being at that time difficult, in consequence of the advance of the Austrian army), was put to considerable inconvenience through one of these protectors. The head of the saint having been unfortunately knocked off by some operation in managing the boat, fell into the sea. Nothing could persuade the master to proceed till it was found; which, from the motion of the vessel, and the drifting of the head, was not soon done. Meanwhile a foul wind sprang up, which prevented them from making Ostia, till after a most tedious and troublesome delay: and indeed, it is but too frequently that the passenger has occasion to lament the blind reliance on supernatural aid, which leads an Italian crew to neglect altogether those ordinary means which the wise

Governor of the World has placed within their reach; and upon the use or neglect of which he may, in his providence, have ordained their fate to depend. Paul himself could not promise the persons with whom he sailed unconditional safety, though he had seen an angel of God; but on the contrary, when the sailors, on whose efforts so much was at stake, were about to 'flee out of the ship,' he expressly said to the centurion and soldiers, 'except these abide in the ship; ye cannot be saved.' Very different, however, is the usual opinion, and the usual practice of the inhabitants of the countries which form the subject of these observations—Ex uno disce omnes. At Lucca is a famous image of our Saviour, called the Volto Santo. The history of it is the following: the figure was made by a sacred artificer of Palestine, whose only difficulty consisted in carving a suitable head. From this, however, he was relieved by receiving one miraculously sent from

heaven. It happened that a certain Piedmontese bishop who was travelling in those parts, came to the knowledge of this idol; and feeling himself moved to steal it, he observed a ship without sailor, passenger, or pilot, cruising off Joppa. To this vessel he committed the prize, when, wonderful to tell, it sailed without human assistance to Lerici, where it refused to resign its cargo to any but the bishop of Lucca. This and similar instances of modern superstition have their counterpart in ancient times. Thus it is recorded by Suetonius, that Galba and his adherents augured the greatest success to their cause, from the circumstance of a ship of Alexandria, laden with arms, coming into Dertosa, a town in Spain, selected as a rallying point for the rebels, without a single hand on board; so that there was no doubt of the war having been undertaken on just grounds, and with the approbation of the gods, 'ut nemini dubium esset justum piumque et fa-

ventibus Diis bellum suscipi.' (*Sueton. Galba*, 10.) But the circumstances attending the introduction of Serapis into Alexandria, as related by Tacitus, are still more apposite.—When Ptolemy, persuaded by a dream, had sent Timotheus with some vessels to Pontus, to convey the image of that god from thence to Egypt, the king of Sinope (for that was the town from which it was brought) could not be prevailed upon, either by the dignity of the embassy, or the size of the fleet, or the value of the presents which accompanied it, to resign an object of so much veneration.—At length the anger of the gods at his obstinacy was indicated by numerous and severe diseases inflicted upon his country. The people, however, were not to be subdued; they continued to resist the removal of the idol, and surrounded its temple; whereupon, without any human aid, it miraculously walked on board one of the vessels, and in the incredibly short time of three days the

fleet found itself at Alexandria, where a temple, corresponding with the extent of the city, was built for its reception. (*Tacit. Hist.* iv. 84.)

Indeed the credulity of the Italian mariners has ever pressed the most faithful of the senses into its service; of which a very curious instance is mentioned by Forsyth, in a note upon his Travels in Italy. It is this: The meteoric appearance which is sometimes seen in the Mediterranean at the close of a storm, and which was anciently called Castor and Pollux—

> Quorum simul alba nautis
> Stella refulsit,
> Concidit ventis agitatus humor.
>
> Whose white star cheers the seaman o'er the deep,
> Glad sign for waves to rest and winds to sleep,

is now hailed by the sailors with equal joy under the name of St. Peter and St. Nicholas.

As this is, perhaps, the only occasion when

I may have to speak on maritime subjects, I shall take the opportunity of mentioning one or two facts which do not strictly belong to the present chapter.

The boatmen of Italy and Sicily, instead of sitting and pulling the oar towards them, stand and push it forwards. Now I observed the same method of propelling a small vessel in one of the Herculanean pictures; and the expression 'incumbere remis' seems particularly applicable to such a practice. At the same time, as notice is taken in Latin authors of the transtra, or benches for the rowers, it is certain that such a method was not adopted to the exclusion of that now generally in use amongst more northern nations. It may be further remarked, that in Sicily the old naval precaution of drawing the vessels ashore is still employed; and for this purpose, large iron hooks are fixed to the sides of the latinas and sparonaras. The absence of tides in the Mediterranean has no doubt contri-

buted to render a plan feasible, which the violence of our own ocean would entirely defeat.

The sparonara having a deck, an awning, and room for about twenty persons, set in motion moreover by oars, sails, or both, probably differs little from the ancient coasters in those countries: and the timidity with which the sailors still conduct her along the water-edge; drag her in the evening on the beach; linger to ascertain the stability of a favourable breeze before they again push her off; as well as the scrupulous care with which they deposit their votive offerings in the churches, exhibit that ignorance of navigation and abhorrence of enterprise, for which the Latin seamen were formerly so conspicuous.

I may here add, that the Italians generally paint upon the prow of their vessels a large eye; a practice no doubt derived from ancient times, when the whole of that extremity of the ship being formed to represent

a bird's head, of course so principal a feature was not omitted. Many of the old coins still preserve it; as those of the families Duilia, Marcia, Minucia, &c. so also do good specimens of the *as*, with its divisions.

But to return. VI. The sixth purpose for which the Lares served was for charms.

To what an extent they were employed in this capacity may be guessed from the number of small antique figures still existing, formed of bronze, bone, ivory, or other materials, bored, and evidently intended to be worn about the neck. In like manner, at this very day, there is scarcely an individual of the lower classes in Italy or Sicily, who is not provided with an image or print of a favourite Madonna or saint, which he suspends from the neck, and conceals under his dress. I remember a shop at Trepani, where the principal stock consisted of figures of the Virgin of that place, carved in bone, about an inch in length, and actually having no

perceptible difference from those in use amongst the Romans eighteen hundred or two thousand years ago. The demand for them is by no means confined to the neighbourhood of the town. A man at Palermo, for instance, opened his waistcoat and displayed to me one which he always wore next his skin. He added, that upon one occasion it had saved his life; that in endeavouring to cross a stream which had been a good deal swollen by the rains, his mule stumbled, and he was thrown into the torrent. In his distress he called upon his protectress, "Santa Madonna, ajutami:" when forthwith an expert swimmer came to his assistance, and restored him and his beast to dry land.

One word more on the subject of Lares, and I have done.

VII. Whatever variety of shapes they assumed, and to be sure some of them were strange enough, the modern saints pursue them through all. In Italy and Sicily there

is nothing upon which superstition has not set her seal. From the temple to the jakes, all is at her disposal and under her control. If in the vineyards, fields, and gardens, the Romans suspended oscilla, and erected statues to Terminus, Priapus, and other Lares, to whose protection they were consigned; (*Tibull.* i. 1. 20.) so do the Italians now make use of the Santa Croce, (one of the most legitimate saints in the calendar), with the same profusion, and for the same ends, to improve the crops and prevent depredation. I recollect particularly, that in the neighbourhood of Catania, where the lands are divided into small allotments by low walls built of masses of lava, the figure of a cross in white-wash was to be seen on them all. I only single out this instance, because it struck me that such symbols were there more than commonly numerous. But it would be well if the matter rested here. Even in the heroic ages of Italy the passages to the baths, the corners of the

streets and squares, and the like public situations, were liable to the same species of contempt, with which such places are treated in our own degenerate times. But it required the ingenuity of a Roman to bring the artillery of his religion to bear against a practice which seemed to have so much to do with necessity and so little with faith. Effected however it was; not by threat of legal prosecution held out against such as should commit nuisances, but by consecrating the walls so exposed with the picture of a deity, or some other hallowed emblem, and by denouncing the wrath of Heaven against those who should be impious enough to pollute what it was their duty to reverence. The figure of a snake, it appears, was sometimes employed for this purpose:

> Hîc, inquis, veto quisquam faxit oletum.
> Pinge duos angues; pueri, sacer est locus, extra
> Meiite. PERS. i. 113.

The snake, it is well known, was reckoned amongst the Gods of the heathens; and in

Egypt special honours were paid it. From thence it was introduced as an object of worship into Italy; in which country, it is manifest from the idols which are yet preserved, that the Egyptian deities prevailed to a wonderful extent. Many of these animals are painted upon the walls of several rooms at Pompeii; amongst others, on those of an apothecary's shop is one of extraordinary size. This latter has been usually understood to have a symbolical reference to the profession of the possessor of the house; but I should be disposed to think that in this, as in other cases, the serpent is merely sustaining the character of one of the Lares.

Again; in a gallery which leads to the Baths of Titus at Rome, there has been discovered, by some late excavations, an ancient notice, scrawled in paint or ink upon the wall, in these terms: "Duodecim Deos, et Dianam, et Jovem Optimum Maximum habeat iratos quisquis hic minxerit aut cacaverit."

These are examples of a prostitution of sacred things sufficiently sordid; not more so, however, than those which may be produced from Italy as it exists still. In the cloister leading to the Chapel of the Virgine del Monte at Bologna, I took notice of an advertisement, in which her displeasure is denounced against persons who profaned that approach to her sanctuary. At Florence similar anti-urinal notices are extremely common; this is one of them— "Respetto P. tutto alla Maria SSa. ed a Jesu." And to this day, from one end of the country to the other, the common means of preventing pollution is to paint some symbol of religious reverence near the luckless spot; sometimes a Madonna, oftener a crucifix, and still more frequently a few souls in the flames of purgatory. These purgatories, which meet the eye more or less upon the walls in every part of Italy, abound to a singular degree in the kingdom of Naples, where the neighbouring volcanos appear to have furnished the ima-

gination of the artist with more than common horrors. Scenes in the infernal regions were probably exhibited to the public of old in a similar manner:

> Vidi ego, (says Tyndarus, in one of Plautus' plays)
> multa sæpe picta quæ Acherunti fierent
> Cruciamenta—verum enimvero nulla adeoque est
> Acheruus
> Atque ubi ego fui in Lapicinis.
>
> Captiv. act. 5. sc. 4.

The torments of Tartarus I have often seen expressed in pictures. But Tartarus were an Elysium to my place of suffering, the Quarries.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE VIRGIN.

FEW phenomena in the Christian world have seemed to me more extraordinary than that the Madonna should have usurped in all Catholic countries, but particularly in Italy and Sicily, so much of that reverence which is only due to the three Persons of the Trinity. To pay such respect to the memory of the mother of our Lord as we owe to a creature selected by the Spirit of God for the mysteries of the incarnation, is highly proper; and by the better informed Catholics, perhaps such respect is all that is offered. At the same time, none can be so blind as not to perceive that the honours assigned to the Madonna by the Italians in general, are of a very dif-

ferent description. Are they in danger? Upon her they call for help. Have they experienced any signal deliverance? To her influence it is ascribed. The most splendid of their processions are dedicated to her glory—the oaths they utter in conversation are commonly in her name—their first exclamation of wonder or of grief is, Santa Maria! Whence does all this proceed? Perhaps it is only to be accounted for by the nature of the religion of ancient Rome. It may be remarked, that Gentilism comprehended a vast variety of female deities, some of which were not less powerful, not less the objects of propitiation and prayer, not placed in a lower rank in the scale of divinity, than the greatest of the gods of the other sex. On the contrary, the superiority of females was established in Egypt as a civil and religious institution, and the same order is observed in Plutarch's treatise of Isis and Osiris. (Vide *Gibbon*, vol. v. p. 103, *note*.) A precedence thus given to the

female deities in Egypt, would probably have its operation in Italy also; a proposition of which no person will entertain much doubt who has observed the proportion which the gods of the Nile bear in every museum of Italian antiquities to those of Greece and Rome. Indeed, when Isis and Serapis were united in one temple in the capital of Italy, priority of place was assumed by the queen. It is natural, therefore, to suppose, that mankind, long retaining a propensity to relapse into idolatry, would endeavour to find some substitute for an important class of beings, which had for so many years exercised undisputed empire over the minds and passions of men, who, from climate and temperament, were perhaps peculiarly disposed to render the fair portion of the inhabitants of heaven a chivalrous obedience. The religion of Christianity, however, as it was taught by our Saviour and his immediate followers, afforded no stock on which this part of heathen

mythology could be grafted. None of the three Persons of the Trinity could, without much effort, be moulded into the form of a goddess; and the circumstance, that some ancient heretics actually did maintain the Holy Ghost to be a female, only serves to show the reluctance with which mankind bade adieu to that sex as objects of worship. On the other hand, the Virgin presented such an opportunity as could hardly escape the penetration of any age, much less of one which could call 'Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.' And indeed we find that a sect of persons, named Colyridians, arose amongst the Arabians, before the end of the fourth century, who offered cakes to the Virgin Mary as a goddess, and the Queen of Heaven. (Vid. *Jortin's Eccles. Rem.* vol. i. 332.) When we consider, therefore, on the one side, the natural disposition of converts from Paganism to mingle and confound the religion they had

quitted with that they had espoused; and, on the other, the willingness which sincere but ill-judging Christians, such as Gregory Thaumaturgus, displayed to come to an accommodation with the Pagans, in hopes that time and improved knowledge might lead them to a purer faith; (Vid. *Suicer. verb.* εἰκὼν.) we shall not be surprised to find that many of the rites and much of the reverence which attached to the several female deities of old, should have been concentrated in favour of the Madonna. An error so likely to arise in the common course of things, was perhaps confirmed by the title of Θεοτοκὸς and Mater Dei, which was assigned to the Virgin without scruple, till the famous Nestorian controversy brought the subject into debate, and occasioned the council of Ephesus in 428, which, after all, decided that the term might be used with propriety.

As this epithet in Pagan times was applied to Cybele, and as that goddess, from her

primitive regard for the ancestors of the Romans,

(Iliacas Mater amavit opes—
Ilium, the mighty Mother ever loved)

was held in peculiar honour in the capital of the world, and celebrated there with a magnificence agreeable to the importance of her character—

Illa Deos peperit . . . . . cessere parenti,
Principiumque dati mater honoris habet—
Ov. Fast. iv. 360.

The gods she bore—to her the immortal race
Resign'd the honours of the foremost place—

so does it seem almost inevitable that some confusion in the minds of half-enlightened persons would ensue in consequence of so singular an identity of name.

A few independent facts which I can mention may tend to give additional weight to this opinion.

I. The number of beggars in Italy and Sicily being very great, as well from the ge-

neral poverty of the countries, as from the mendicant religious orders with which they are filled, a proportional variety has been introduced into the forms of supplication. Thus some beg 'for the church,' some 'for the souls in purgatory,' whilst another class, at least as comprehensive as the former, request charity 'for the Madonna.' Now it is not a little curious, that it was an ancient practice to beg for the mother of the gods. Aristoxenus is applauded for an answer which he once made to one of these applications; ου τρεφω, replied he, την μητερα των Θεων ην οι Θεοι τρεφουσιν. (*Clem. Alexandr.*) 'I feed not the mother of the gods, whom the gods themselves support.' And it is a striking circumstance, that a law is mentioned by Cicero, allowing persons in the service of Cybele the exclusive privilege of collecting alms. (*Cic. de Leg. 2.*) 'Præter Idææ matris famulos, eosque justis diebus, nequis stipem cogito.'

II. Again; is it not possible that the dis-

gusting use of the Galli in the worship of Cybele may have occasioned the introduction of a similar class of persons into the service of the church of Italy; persons which the canons of that church itself do not permit to enter into holy orders? And surely the mere improvement of its music does not seem an adequate cause to account for a practice so revolting, one which neither Christianity nor Judaism can possibly countenance.

III. There is yet another coincidence equally singular. Our Lady-Day, or the Day of the Blessed Virgin of the Roman Catholics, was heretofore dedicated to Cybele. It was called 'Hilaria,' says Macrobius, on account of the joy occasioned by the arrival of the equinox, when the light was about to exceed the darkness in duration; and from the same author, as well as from Lampridius, it appears that it was a festival of the Mater Deûm. Moreover, in a Greek Commentary upon Dionysius, cited by Dempster in his Roman

Antiquities, it is asserted, 'that the Hilaria was a festival in honour of the mother of the gods, which was proper to the Romans.' (Vide *Dempster. Antiq. Roman. Annot. ad C.* 4.)

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE FESTIVAL OF S. AGATHA AT CATANIA.

This festival, of which I was an eye-witness, comprises in itself so many coincidences between the ancient and modern religious rites of Italy and Sicily, that I have determined to assign to it a separate chapter.

It may be proper to state, that S. Agatha is the patron saint of Catania, and is believed to be extremely instrumental in shielding it from the violence of the neighbouring Ætna. For it may be observed, that as every heathen town had its protecting god*, so has every

* Non Divos specialibus faventes
Agris, nubibus, insulisque, canto;
Saturnum Latio, Jovemque Cretæ,
Junonemque Samo, Rhodoque Solem,
Ennæ Persephonem, Minervam Hymetto,
Vulcanum Liparæ, Papho Dianam.

Sidon. Apollin. Car. ix.

Christian town in these countries its protecting saint; and as Mars was once the defender of Rome; Diana of Syracuse; Ceres of Enna; so is St. Peter the guardian of the first; Sa. Lucia of the second; St. John of the last. But to continue. In the tremendous eruption of 1669, when the lava was rolling down its enormous torrents to the sea, her veil was carried in procession, and presented to the fiery deluge. The consequence, of course, was, that it retired, and spared the city. She is reported to have suffered martyrdom in the early ages of the church, partly for her unwillingness to sacrifice herself to the passion of Quintianus, and partly for her unshaken adherence to the Christian faith. Her death, which was effected by a succession of torments, took place in the amphitheatre of Catania; and in that town it is, that her memory is still so much venerated. It is a curious circumstance, that in many parts of Italy and Sicily where there was a celebrated

deity of old, there is now a saint or Madonna of no less note. Catania, for instance, as we learn from Cicero, was always famous for the honours it paid to Ceres. (*Cic. contra Verr.* 4.) We shall discover in the sequel whether they were not very much the same as those now assigned to S. Agatha. Let me not be understood to confine my observations to the rites of Ceres. To these, however, and to some other Pagan ceremonies, may be traced many which have been instituted in commemoration of our Christian saint.

On the 1st of February, then, the festival opened with a horse-race, and this amusement was repeated on the following day. Though my purpose does not require me to enter into a description of this spectacle, yet as it is one of the most popular in Italy and Sicily, and is at the same time so unlike any thing which goes by the same name in England, I may perhaps be excused if I bestow a word upon it. The course is the principal street, which

in Catania, as in most other other towns, is from this circumstance called the Corso.—The ponies destined for the contest have no riders; but by means of wax, ribbons are firmly attached to their backs; and to these again are appended bladders, and weighted pieces of wood armed with sharp spikes; the noise of the one, and the pain inflicted by the other, being amply sufficient to urge to exertion animals much better qualified to resist the effects of either than the horse. At the firing of a signal-gun they are turned loose from one extremity of the street; and amidst the shouts of the populace which lines it on both sides, they make what haste they can to the other. Here I discovered, to my great surprise, sitting in the open air, under a canopy of crimson, arrayed in robes of office a good deal resembling those of our barristers, the members of the senate, with their Intendente or President. The business of these first magistrates of the city, decked

out in all their paraphèrnalia, and attended by drummers and fifers and musketeers, was to declare the winner amongst half a dozen jades, the best of which was not worth ten pounds. It was difficult to suppress a smile on seeing one of the parties rise, discuss the matter with the rest of the bench, and, not without much action and emphasis and deliberation, deliver the *senatus consultum* to the expecting crowd. The mottos on the canopy might have been selected for the purposes of burlesque, '*Invictas supero*,' '*Catana Regum Tutrix*,' '*Castigo rebelles*.'

But to return to my subject, we know from Ovid, that a horse-race heretofore formed one of the spectacles at the festival of Ceres.

Circus erat pompâ celeber, numeroque Deorum,
Primaque ventosis palma petetur equis.
Hi Cereris ludi.

Fast. iv. 391.

With pomp adorn'd, with gods in gallant train,
With rival coursers scouring o'er the plain,
The circus greets kind Ceres.

And ridiculous as it may seem to us, who attach so much less importance and solemnity to public exhibitions of this kind than the inhabitants of the South, yet it appears that the prætor, the second magistrate in point of dignity in the Republic, was anciently ex-officio steward of the races at Rome.

It may be further remarked, that the name of Senate, used in almost every town, however small, of Italy and Sicily, to express the constituted authorities, is a relic of antiquity. Amongst the various charges which Cicero brings against Verres, that of interfering improperly in the formation of senates for the several towns in his province, is amongst the number. (*Cic. con. Verr.* 3.)

Such are the coincidences which present themselves, upon considering the first days of the festival of St. Agatha.

On the third, were stationed in the great square called the Piazza di Porta di Aci Reale, twenty-one clusters of monstrous wax candles, four in each cluster; every candle measuring from ten to fifteen feet long; and some of them not less than a foot in circumference: they were fixed in gilt frames, decorated with a small picture of the saint; and were all votive offerings from the several companies of shoe-makers, tailors, fruiterers, ice-sellers, &c. each contending with the rest in the magnitude of the candles which it presented to the saint. A procession being marshalled to conduct them to the mother-church, the black Franciscans, the Dominicans, the Deacons, the Canons in their red silk robes and mitres, and the indefatigable senate, marched along in due solemnity. To these succeeded the clusters of candles, each cluster supported by four men, who groaned under their burden and the heat of the day. The members of the several companies, with

small tapers in their hands, followed their respective donations: at length they were all deposited in the nave of the church, amidst shouting and tossing of hats, and every demonstration of such frantic joy as seemed ill adapted to the interior of a house where God is professed to be worshipped.

In the ceremonies of this day there are several circumstances which remarkably accord with the festival of Ceres.

A profusion of tapers was thought peculiarly acceptable to that goddess.

Et si thura aberunt, unctas accendite tædas:
Parva bonæ Cereri sint modo casta, placent.
Fast. iv. 411.

Then light the unctuous torch; should incense fail,
With Ceres chaste not costly gifts prevail.

But it was further usual to dedicate to her candles or torches of that enormous size (*Vid. Meursii Eleusin.*) which I have said

are now offered to St. Agatha; emblematical, no doubt, of the pines which she is reputed to have plucked up and lighted at Ætna when she traversed Sicily in search of her daughter Proserpine.

> Illic accendit geminas pro lampade pinus:
> Hinc Cereris sacris nunc quoque tæda datur.
> *Fast.* iv. 494.

> There for a torch two lofty pines she lights,
> And hence the flambeaux grace her mystic rites.

Now though this was a very good reason for the adoption of these gigantic flambeaux into the festival of the heathen goddess; yet does it not prove the propriety of enlisting them in the service of the Christian saint, to no particular in whose history have they the smallest relation; whence it seems highly probable, that in the struggle which continued for several ages between the heathen and Christian systems, the people of Catania determined to come to a compromise, re-

taining indeed the Pagan ceremonies, but consenting to call the object of them, instead of Ceres, S. Agatha.

Even the minutiæ of the primitive and present festival afford some points of coincidence; and the magnitude of their respective candles now forms a subject for emulation amongst the admirers of the saint, as it once did amongst the votaries of her heathen precursor. Thus it is recorded in Theophrastus, that one Damippus 'sent the greatest torch to the mysteries. Δαμιππος μυστηριοις μεγιστην δαδα εστησε. (*Meurs. Eleusin.*) Indeed one of the days in which the Eleusinia were celebrated, was called, by way of distinction, 'the day of torches.'

Mention has been made of the companies or friendly societies, as bearing a conspicuous part in this festival; and surely in no countries are such associations of individuals so abundant as in Italy and Sicily. The Italian language and the Roman Catholic calendar

have been almost exhausted for names to distinguish them from each other. Thus a club or compagnia, degli Calzolaii; degli Sartori; di S. Simone; di S. S. Suffragio; della Misericordia; degli buoni uomini; di S. Maria; di S. Pellegrino; di S. Giovanni Battista; delle Stimate, &c. meets you in every direction. But whatever may be the motive which induces them to connect themselves by these bonds of union; whether mutual relief, or promiscuous charity, or a gregarious disposition, or political intrigue, one object is common to them all, that of adding splendour to the processions and solemnities of their church.

So strong a propensity had the Romans to form themselves into clubs of a similar description, Sodalitates or Collegia, that Julius Cæsar thought it prudent to reduce the number of them. (*Sueton. Jul. Cæs.* 42.) In spite, however, of this check, they continued to increase, till they were again restrained by

Augustus. (*Aug.* 32.) Religious festivals served in those days also as rallying points for them; and we learn from Cicero that many were instituted at the introduction of the worship of Cybele. (*De Senec.* 3.) Such are the observations which the third day of the festival suggested.

On the fourth, soon after midnight, the cannon of the town began to fire, and continued firing at intervals till break of day. The bells tolled, and the persevering voices of the people in the streets were enough to banish "sleep from Drusus and the seals." Every thing indicated the approaching storm of superstitious zeal, destined to burst forth in the morning. At seven o'clock the great piazza was crowded with busy figures, some to be spectators, and some prepared to officiate in the ceremony. In front of the west door of the cathedral stood a silver throne for the saint, under a splendid tester, the Thensa of the gentiles, (vide *Spencer*

de Leg. Hebræor. 3, *sect.* 1.) supported upon shafts of about twenty yards long, to which were tied ropes as much longer. Hundreds of citizens, clothed in white frocks and caps, were waiting to draw this ponderous machine, intended to convey the image of the saint, together with those parts of her body and dress which are still preserved. No sooner were these precious relics brought out of the church, than the whole square rung with the cries of "Viva S. Agatha!" the men jumping and throwing up their caps with an enthusiasm which nothing but a belief in the powers of the saint could possibly have inspired. In front of the car rode triumphant the mysterious image, adorned with a profusion of jewels, and with rings only limited in number by the impossibility of fixing more upon her hands. On one shaft stood a priest, and on the other a layman with a silver bell, which he rung from time to time with great vehemence. Upon a signal given, those

whose business it was to bear along the car sprang forward, preceded by the senate and candles, and accompanied by a host of persons uncovered, and filling the air with shouts in honour of the saint. Thus the procession marched about the town, sometimes halting, and sometimes entering a church; on which latter occasion, the candles were arranged on each side the nave; the priests performed a service at the altar; the organ pealed; the people leaped, and made the aisles echo to the cries of Viva S. Agatha! Meanwhile parties of ladies, masked in their silk hoods, paraded the streets, seizing the hats, sticks, gloves, of the gentlemen they encountered; and expecting that their captures should be redeemed by compliments and confectionary. About nine o'clock in the evening S. Agatha, having completed her peregrinations, was conducted by torchlight to the church from which she set out; whilst the bishop of the place, forced out of his house

by the resistless zealots, and hoisted upon the shafts as a living colleague to the dead idol and relics, was hurried along, with less satisfaction to himself than to his flock, towards his own cathedral. The image, and the silver chest containing the sacred remains, were then dismounted from the car, and brought up the nave to be deposited in the chapel, where they were kept under the custody of three keys. At this moment the madness of the multitude was at its height: they danced, roared out, "Viva S. Agatha!" and rushed to touch the consecrated case. At length it was withdrawn, and so concluded the ceremonies of this laborious day.

Now though I cannot, perhaps, produce a parallel to every circumstance which I have here detailed, yet so many individual points of resemblance to the Eleusinia may be detected, that any occasional difficulty in proving the similarity of the two festivals on the whole, may rather be imputed to a defect

in the means of tracing it out, than to a real discrepancy. The objects to which I would call the attention of my reader are these:

First, to the dress of the persons officiating in the procession of the saint. It was not the ordinary costume of the country; neither was its colour left to be selected at random according to the taste or caprice of the wearers; but it was made expressly for the occasion, and was invariably white. In all heathen rites that colour was thought to have a favourable influence upon the gods, and the prayer of a suppliant so clothed was held to have a more than common claim upon the bounty of Heaven. (Vide *Pers. Sat.* 2. 40.) In the worship of Ceres, however, no other colour was even permitted:

Alba decent Cererem, (says the poet of the Fasti), vestes
Cerealibus albas
Sumite, nunc pulli velleris usus abest. iv. 620.

In Ceres games be all your garments white;
That goddess loathes the colour of the night.

Secondly, the procession itself deserves notice. In the festival of Ceres, the holy basket, called Καλαθιον, was drawn about in a consecrated cart, the people following and crying Χαιρε Δημητερ, Hail Ceres! Change the καλαθιον into a chest of relics, (which indeed, like the λαρναξ αρρητος in the Dionysia, it was probably understood to be,) and the χαιρε Δημητερ into Viva S. Agatha, and we have the festival as it exists still.

But, thirdly, there is a coincidence in time, which is remarkable. It was the *fourth* day also which was selected for this pompous procession in the Eleusinia. This, though in itself a trifle, is a point of harmony against which the odds were considerable, and which therefore may with reason be suspected to arise from other causes than accident. Whether the practical jokes exercised by the females in masks, may be deduced from that jesting and raillery which was levelled against all who passed over the bridge of the Cephi-

sus, in the celebration of the original mysteries at Eleusis, and which custom might have been transferred, together with the rites themselves, to the countries that received them, I leave to others to determine; observing, however, at the same time, that an argument in support of such a supposition is derived from the circumstance, that in both cases this licence was adopted on the day of the procession.

On the fifth day of the festival the relics, which had hitherto been concealed in the sacred chest, were exhibited to the populace. This was not done without great pomp. The bishop, seated under a canopy in the nave of the cathedral, having received the homage of the inferior clergy, and suffered himself to be arrayed by numerous attendants in all the splendour of a Roman Catholic pontiff, at length descended from his throne to say mass at the high altar, over which were elevated the foot, the breast, and the miraculous veil

of the saint. From the intricacies of this scene I selected some particulars, to which I shall presently have occasion to allude.—Mass ended, one of the ecclesiastics was occupied during the remainder of the day in presenting to the lips of each individual of the crowd the revered relics; whilst another explained the life of the saint, with suitable reflections and inferences. Having finished his address, the latter recited some verses descriptive of the virtues and meritorious actions of their great Protectress. Two intercalary lines commenced each stanza:

> Heroina di cielo, Agatha bella,
> Sia nel mio morire propizia Stella.

At the conclusion of the same, upon a signal given by the priest to the congregation around him, and which principally consisted of women who listened to him with extreme devotion, all united in a responsive Pater noster. The deepest interest was evidently

taken in these religious duties: and I observed tears in the eyes of many females as they approached the altar.

Now for the application.—Anciently relics were objects of reverence in Pagan worship: thus the original sow by which Æneas received the verification of the augury is said by Varro to have been preserved by the priests at Lavinium. (Vide *Varr. et Dionys. Halicarnass. l.* 1. *c.* 13.) Moreover, at the Eleusinia it is expressly said, that there was an exposition of relics. 'Veils,' says Psellus, 'were generally spread before the shrines, to conceal the things which were contained therein. At the Eleusinian mysteries, however, they were exposed; it being judged better to display them periodically only, lest that which was sacred should be too often submitted to the eyes of the profane.'—(*Meurs. Eleusin.* vol. 2, p. 480.) Again, the custom of kissing objects of religious reverence, so universally prevailing in Italy and

Sicily, seems to have been a mark of affection formerly bestowed on the images of the heathen gods with equal profusion. At present, nothing meets the eye more frequently than the wood of a crucifix deeply worn by the lips of the devout. Nay, I have seen the waxen image of a saint duly provided with a bronze foot to prevent attrition; and the toe of the statue of St. Peter, formed of that metal out of an old Jupiter Capitolinus, in the great church of the same name at Rome, is worn perfectly bright.

It appears then from Cicero that the mouth and chin of the image of Hercules at Agrigentum were polished in the same way. 'In that temple,' says he, 'there is a bronze statue of Hercules, than which it would not be easy to find any thing more beautiful: indeed, its mouth and chin are slightly worn away, because the people in their prayers and thanksgivings are not only in the habit of worshipping, but also of kissing it.' (*Cicer. in*

Verr. iv. §. 43.) Lucretius again tells us that the hands of the idols were apt to suffer in a similar manner:

> Tum portas propter ahenas
> Signa manus dextras ostendunt attenuari
> Sæpe salutantûm tactu præterque meantûm.
>
> *Lucr.* 1.

> Then near the doors the reverend statues stand,
> Worn down and polish'd in the outstretch'd hand;
> So oft the crowd, respectful as they pass,
> Salute and touch the consecrated brass.

Where it may be remarked, that the people offered this salutation in passing, as they entered or quitted the temples; the very custom actually existing at this day.

Further; amongst the attendants of the Bishop of Catania were two persons who stood by his side holding fans of peacocks' tails. They were called Cacciamuschi, or fly-hunters. I have since also observed similar servants in waiting upon the Pope. Indeed when his holiness, from the balcony

over the great entrance to St. Peter's, bestows his blessing on the multitude below him, two white peacocks' tails, forming a skreen, are raised and expanded at the back of his gorgeous chair. But as there is no reason for supposing that flies will be more vexatious on occasions of sacerdotal state, (and on those alone such officers are now employed,) than at other times; and moreover as the men never appear to make any practical use of these implements, it might have been conjectured that they had their appointment at some period when their services were more necessary than at present, and have since been retained simply as ministers of parade.

Certain it is, then, that in the wealthier families of old Rome such persons formed a part of the establishment. By Plautus they are called 'Flabelliferæ,' and are enumerated amongst the other domestics:

Familia tota
Vestispicæ, unctor, auri custos, flabelliferæ, sandaligeristæ, &c. *Trin.* 2. 1. 22.

What then was their peculiar office? An epigram in Martial enables us to answer this inquiry. It was to chase the flies from the food upon the dinner table:

Lambere quæ turpes prohibet tua prandia muscas
Alitis eximiæ cauda superba fuit. 14. 67.

The stately bird her feathery train supplies
To guard thy table from the loathsome flies.

But they were also in attendance upon the ancient sacrifices, as appears from a picture at Herculaneum: no doubt for the same purpose; to disperse the flies which would naturally collect round the flesh offerings prepared for the gods. This was an adequate reason for the institution of such officers. And now, though the meat is no longer laid upon the altar, and therefore their assistance called for no more, still are they retained,

either from unconsciousness of their origin, or from that reluctance so remarkable in the church of Rome to resign a particle of the pomp which distinguishes her services.

The verses read by the priest upon this occasion I cannot repeat; and therefore it may be superfluous to say more upon them than that they were a poetical catalogue of the leading events in the life of the saint, much after the manner of Horace's ode to Mercury in the first, or that to Bacchus in his second book. (*Od.* 1. 10; 2. 19.) At the same time it may be a matter of conjecture, whether the practice itself did not exist in the pagan church, and whether the priest on festivals did not recite some established metrical composition in praise of the deity to whom the day was dedicated. Thus when the great lyric poet addresses the young men and maidens of Rome under the assumed character of the priest of the Muses, he pro-

mises to repeat to them, not the carol to which they had so frequently listened before, but verses till then never heard:

> Odi profanum vulgus et arceo:
> Favete linguis. Carmina non prius
> Audita, Musarum sacerdos,
> Virginibus puerisque canto.
>
> Away, away, ye vulgar throng! nor dare
> Profane our rites with one unholy word:—
> Priest of the Nine, I sing a measured prayer
> Ne'er yet by virgin or by stripling heard.

The expression 'carmina non prius audita' must either have no meaning at all, or it must be contrasted with some old well-known hymn which it was the business of the priest to sing or read to the congregation, and from the use of which it was not common to depart*.

* I do not think that Baxter's construction of this passage makes any material difference in the meaning which has been commonly given to it.—'Non prius audita,' says the commentator,' h. e. 'virginibus puerisque; non autem canto virginibus puerisque,' ut hactenus interpretes. At any rate, these youths and maidens appear to be those to

Finally, it may be remarked, that as the greater and less Eleusinia were celebrated in the same year, at an interval of six months, so are there now two annual festivals to S. Agatha, the one in February, the other in August. The first of these I have already described, and I could not find that the latter differed from it in any material points, except that it is on the whole more splendid, and in particular that the idol is exalted upon a stupendous car, high as the roofs of the loftiest houses, and is thus drawn in triumph about the town by upwards of twenty yoke of oxen. The festival of S. Rosolia, the patron saint of Palermo, exhibits a similar spectacle; and I doubt not that both the one and the other derive their origin from a common source—the

whom the priest of the Muses addresses himself; for we know that such persons were usually selected to sing the praises of the gods at their festivals; and suitable hymns must then have been put into their hands. (Vide *Carmen Sæculare*, 5.) I say this, however, under correction.

honours paid to pagan deities, but especially to Ceres, whose worship radiating from Enna, the centre of Sicily, and the throne of her glory, extended to the most remote and inaccessible shores of the island. Is it asked then from whence comes the towering car and multitude of oxen? I answer, from Paganism. From the rites of Juno, of Cybele, or of Ceres. Thus in the murrain amongst the cattle, so beautifully described in the third Georgic, it is expressly mentioned that no heifers could be found to drag the chariot of the queen of heaven:

> Tempore non alio, dicunt regionibus illis
> Quæsitas ad sacra boves Junonis: et uris
> Imparibus ductos alta ad Donaria currus.
>
> *Georg.* iii. 531.

> 'Twas then that buffaloes, ill-pair'd, were seen
> To draw the car of Jove's imperial queen
> For want of oxen.
>
> *Dryden.*

In the Æneid the same honours are recorded to have been paid to the mother of the gods:

Qualis Berecynthia Mater
Invehitur curru, Phrygias turrita per urbes.
Æn. vi. 784.

So through the Phrygian cities forth is led
Throned on a car, with turrets on her head,
The Berecynthian Mother.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE CHURCHES OF ITALY AND SICILY.

It will be the business of this chapter to trace the points of similarity discoverable between the ancient temples of Italy and its modern churches.

Through a scheme for extirpating paganism which was possibly adopted by Constantine, but which was certainly acted upon to a great extent by Theodosius and subsequent emperors, (*Bingham*, vol. iii. p. 145,) a very wide door was opened for the admission of the old superstition into the Christian system. I mean the conversion of heathen temples into churches. The followers of Christ having now no further need to dread the power or malevolence of their enemies, became disposed to relax a little of that jealousy with

which they had been accustomed hitherto to watch their approaches. The arm of authority, so long exercised in laying the Christians prostrate, was now as active in confounding their former oppressors. Thus circumstanced, they entered the temples of the heathens as conquerors. They were the field of their victories now resigned by the foe:

> Panduntur portæ—Juvat ire et Dorica castra
> Desertosque videre locos littusque relictum.
> Pars stupet innuptæ donum exitiale Minervæ,
> Et molem mirantur equi.
>
> The gates unfold—forth rush the throng to trace
> The camp, the shore, and each deserted place;
> Some mark the gift to war's chaste maid decreed,
> And scan the members of the monstrous steed.

And thus, like the Trojans, after having successfully resisted all open violence for so many years, they fell in love with an idol, without knowing how much mischief it contained.

In these temples, then, a variety of ceremonies had been practised for ages, in

which the ancestors of the Christians had partaken; which many of the converts themselves had not forgotten; and which all had probably experienced frequent opportunities of witnessing. Here was the Aquaminarium, or vessel for purifying-water at the doors. Here were paintings and statues of workmanship too exquisite to be destroyed. Here were numerous altars, and censers, and tripods, and votive offerings, and a thousand things besides, which composed the furniture of a heathen temple. It was natural that many of these ornaments or utensils, particularly such as were in themselves indifferent, should still maintain their ground through sufferance. The same spirit which would find no scruple in employing the profane building itself for a sacred purpose, would probably feel as little in adapting the interior parts of it to the same object. The one would not be thought a greater violation of decency than the other. What wonder then that the pre-

sent places of worship should afford many striking features of resemblance to those of a heathen date?

To proceed with our parallel: The vast number of temples with which ancient Italy was filled, has been succeeded by churches no less abundant. Of the former, in Rome alone there are said to have been four hundred and twenty sacred to Pagan gods; whilst of the latter, in the modern city and its suburbs, there are upwards of a hundred and fifty sacred to Christian saints. And as heretofore many temples were consecrated to the same deity under different titles, so now are there many churches devoted to the same saint, or to the Madonna, distinguished only by a diversity of epithets. Thus in ancient Rome there was a temple of Jupiter Custos, of Jupiter Feretrius, of Jupiter Sponsor, of Jupiter Stator, of Jupiter Tonans, of Jupiter Victor, &c.; of Venus Calva, Venus Verticordia, Venus Capitolina, Venus Erycina, Venus

Cloacina, Venus Victrix, &c. So in modern Rome we find a church of Sa. Maria degli Angeli, Sa. Maria di Araceli, Sa. Maria Imperatrice, Sa. Maria Liberatrice, Sa. Maria della Consolazione, Sa. Maria Egyptiaca, Sa. Maria dell' Anima, &c.; S. Pietro in Vaticano, S. Pietro in Montorio, S. Pietro in Vinculo, S. Pietro in Carcere, &c. Again, the heathen temples were often dedicated to two divinities, as to Castor and Pollux, to Venus and Cupid, to Venus and Rome, to Honour and Virtue, to Isis and Serapis, &c. In like manner there are now churches to S. Marcellinus and Peter, to Jesus and Maria, to Dominicus and Sistus, to Celsus and Julianus, to S. Vincentius and Anastasius, &c.

Sometimes even more deities were worshipped by the Gentiles under the same roof, and these had each their respective altars. Thus in what is called the temple of Isis at Pompeii, it seems that religious rites were also paid to Serapis and Anubis. Hence in

front of the Cella stand three large altars for sacrifice, and at regular intervals round it several others for incense. In the temple adjoining this, three statues were found, one of Æsculapius, one of Hygeia, and a third of Priapus. In the temple of Minerva Medica at Rome, besides the figure of the goddess who has given her name to the building, were discovered those of Æsculapius, Pomona, Adonis, Venus, Faunus, Hercules, and Antinous. Accordingly in Italy and Sicily many altars are generally found in the same church to this day. It may be thought superfluous to select an instance of what is so universal not only in these but in all Catholic countries. In St. Peter's at Rome, however, is an altar ascribed to S. Leo, another to the Madonna della Colonna, a third to the Madonna del Soccorso, a fourth to S. Gregory, a fifth to S. Sebastian, a sixth to S. Vinceslaus, a seventh to S. Erasmus, besides many more.

But there is a further and more remarkable

connexion in many cases between the present churches and the ancient temples of Italy and Sicily. For though Dr. Middleton mentions some of the latter at Rome which have been converted into places of Christian worship, yet he does not observe all the traces which their actual names and other circumstances afford of their former consecration. Thus the temple of Vesta is now the church of the Madonna of the Sun; fire being the prevailing idea in both appellations. That of Romulus and Remus is now Cosmo and Damien, not only brothers, but twin brothers. The site of the old Templum Salutis is supposed to be occupied by the church of S. Vitale, if not an imaginary saint, at least one whose name was selected as doing little violence to that of Salus. In the church of S. Maria Maggiore, the cradle or manger in which our Saviour was laid is amongst the relics; a peculiarity very probably derived from that building having succeeded the temple of Juno

Lucina. At a short distance from the old Lavinium, or Pratica, (as it is now called) is a chapel dedicated to S. Anna Petronilla. Here we have, no doubt, a corruption of Anna Perenna, the sister of Dido, who was cast ashore upon the coast of Italy near the Numicius; a point corresponding with the situation of this little church. On that occasion having accidentally met with Æneas and Achates, and rejected all terms of reconciliation with them, she was warned by the shade of Dido in a dream to escape from the treachery of Lavinia. In the sudden consternation excited by this vision, she is said to have precipitated herself into the Numicius, of which she became the protecting nymph,—whilst games, described at length by Ovid, were instituted to her honour.

Placidi sum nympha Numici
Amne perenne latens, Anna Perenna vocor.
Fast. iii. 523.

This stream's *perennial* nymph, I steal from view,
Once Anna called, but now *Perenna* too.

Thus Anna, the sister of the Virgin, has inherited the seat and credit of Anna, the sister of the queen of Carthage, on condition of adding to her former name that of Petronilla.

In the Foro Boario is a church dedicated to S. Maria in Cosmedin, better known, however, to the common people under the title of in Bocca della Verità: a name which probably preserves the memorial of a custom at Rome of very great antiquity. It seems that in the Forum Boarium was an altar, called the Ara Maxima, erected by Hercules to record his victory over Cacus. (*Ov. Fast.* i. 581.) At this altar it was usual to ratify solemn compacts by an oath, and hence the expression 'meherclè' became so frequent a form of protestation. Such an appeal to heaven in confirmation of the words which proceeded out of the mouth of the contracting parties, has with reason been supposed to have entailed upon the Virgin, who oc-

cupies a church at no great distance from the spot, the designation of which I have spoken.

Again, one of the most celebrated temples of Sicily was that of Mount Eryx. To the antiquity of its foundation, which was prior even to that of Lavinium itself, Virgil takes occasion to allude; and at Rome and elsewhere the goddess was worshipped under the distinctive appellation of Erycina. Now it is a curious fact that the Madonna di Trepani, (the ancient Drepanum, which stands at the foot of Mount Eryx), is perhaps at this moment one of the most renowned in the Mediterranean. Her patronymic is taken from

* I am aware that the name Bocca della Verità has been understood to refer to a stone near the entrance of the church, in the middle of which is a mouth. This mouth, says tradition, served heretofore as an ordeal; and the suspected party, when he had put his hand into it, was unable to withdraw it, unless innocent. If this tale, however, is not altogether fabulous, it does but resolve itself into the ancient appeal to the Ara Maxima.

the neighbouring town, as that of Venus was derived from the neighbouring mountain.—The site of the heathen temple is not very distant from that of the present church; the former having been placed at the summit of Mount Eryx, the latter at its base; a difference easily explained, when we consider the difficulty which the monks and inhabitants of Trepani would experience in labouring up one of the highest hills in Sicily, whenever they wished to pay their devotions to the saint.

Let us now examine the circumstances which gave rise to the building of so many temples of old; and let us see whether the same have not operated towards the erection of churches.

I. Many were votive.

Thus one was erected to Mercury near the Circus; a votive offering to that god, that he might be induced to extinguish the great fire of Nero. (Vide *Nardini Storia Antica di*

Roma, p. 377.) Another to Jupiter Stator, which the Consul Atilius promised on condition that he would check the flight of the Romans, and rally them against the Samnites. (*Liv.* x. 36.) Another to Jupiter Tonans, raised by Augustus out of gratitude for an escape from a thunderbolt, which had killed one of his attendants whilst he was travelling in Spain. Of this three columns are yet standing in the Forum. (*Sueton. Aug.* 29.)

At Calatanessa, in Sicily, I remember seeing an inscription 'to Æsculapius and to the river Himera, the Preservers of the Town,' supposed to have belonged to some temple erected to those deities for the cessation of a pest. A votive temple was built by Metellus, or L. Corn. Scipio, (for it is a matter of doubt which), after the Roman fleet had weathered a storm off Corsica. (*Ov. Fast.* 6.) These examples may suffice.

In like manner, the church of S. Andrew on the road from the Porta del Popolo to the

Ponte Molle was reared to that saint by Julius III. in grateful acknowledgment for having been preserved on the day of his festival from the soldiers of the duke of Bourbon. At Venice, the church della Salute was erected, for the deliverance of the city from pestilence in the year 1586. That del Redemptore, for a similar blessing in 1630. Near Messina, there stands a church on the sea-coast, dedicated to a certain S. Marianus, by one Francesco di Mello, as a votive offering after a prosperous voyage. Many more instances will suggest themselves both to travellers and to readers of travels.

II. Some again served as monuments of important events.

Hence a temple was built at Segesta to Æneas, commemorative of his having touched there, and augmented the city by a colony of Trojans. (*Dionys. Halicar.* 7. 157.) Another was raised at Rome on the spot previously occupied by the cottage of Romulus. Another

to Æsculapius was founded in the island of the Tiber, to indicate the place where the serpent of that deity, brought from Epidaurus, escaped out of the vessel to land.—(*Ov. Met.* 15. 745.) Another was erected to Hercules, on that part of Mount Aventine where he conquered Cacus.

Thus the church of S. Paolo, at Syracuse, is said to record the precise situation of the house in which that Apostle lived during his stay there. The Santa Maria, in the Via Lata at Rome, preserves the memory of the place where Peter and Paul lodged. S. Pietro nel Grado, near Pisa, is the reputed spot where the great saint of the Catholic church disembarked and tied his boat when he came up the Arno to visit Tuscany. The church, however, is at present, owing to a change in the course of that river, at some distance from its banks.—A chapel again has been dedicated to S. Remould, at Camaldovi, to designate the rock on which that saint

alighted, without personal injury, after having been thrown down a tremendous precipice in a struggle with the devil.

III. Lastly, some were built for the reception of things peculiarly sacred.

Thus a temple was founded by Numa for the shield which had fallen from Heaven: so was a church erected at Rome as a depositary for the chains with which S. Peter was bound. The temple of Vesta was reared to receive the momentous Palladium: so was the church of S. Maria in Campitelli, in common with many others, to inclose a miraculous image of the Madonna.

Such are a few particulars by which a general connexion between the Idol temples and Christian churches of Italy and Sicily is proved to subsist. It remains to produce some facts in detail, by which the truth of the proposition may be further illustrated. But, before I proceed, I shall take this opportunity of observing, that the oblong

churches, so numerous in Italy, and in many instances so ancient, are clearly constructed upon the model of the Roman Basilicæ. Indeed, the very name of Basilica, by which they are denominated at Rome, is an argument of their origin. Thus we have the Basilica di S. Giovanni Laterano; the Basilica di S. Maria Maggiore; the Basilica di S. Paolo, and many more. But it will be better to state the plan of one of these buildings actually existing at Pompeii, in a state almost perfect. Its length is about 208 feet; its breadth 83. It is divided into a nave and two side aisles (of which the nave is the widest) by two rows of columns, twelve in each row, running longitudinally. The great entrance corresponds with the western door in modern churches, in addition to which are two smaller side-doors. At the further extremity is an elevated tribunal (anciently called βημα,) from which the magistrates dispensed justice, and which has been succeeded

in the present places of worship by the altar; a circumstance proved not simply by the identity of their situations, but by the fact that the very same word βημα was long used by Christian writers to express the chancel in general, and in particular the bishop's chair, placed near the altar. (*Vide Bingham*, vol. iii. p. 186.) I need not observe how exactly this description accords with the modern oblong church.

The doors of the heathen temples were usually made of bronze, and were ornamented with appropriate subjects in basso relievo. A taste for employing this material in such a manner, though existing amongst the early Romans, appears to have increased after Mummius had sacked Corinth, and transported much of the metal for which that and the neighbouring towns were so celebrated to his native country. (*Plin. N. H.* 34. 3.)

The same metal is very commonly used for the doors of the Italian churches. Take,

for instance, those of the cathedral at Pisa; of the Baptistery at Florence; of S. Peter's at Rome; of S. Cosmo and Damian; of S. John Lateran, &c. &c.

The ancient temples were decorated with paintings. Pliny speaks of those at Lanuvium and Ardea in very early times, and those at Rome were subsequently adorned in the same way. (*Plin. N. H.* 35. c. 4.) Much of the plunder which Verres collected from the temples in Sicily consisted of pictures. From that of Minerva at Syracuse he plundered no less than twenty-seven of fine execution. (*Cic. in Verr.* 4.)

The walls of the churches in these countries are now hung with pictures, many of which are by the best masters; and though it is true that this custom of ornamenting places of worship with the labours of the artist is not confined to Italy and Sicily, yet it is certain that, however general it may be, it is borrowed from the Pagans.

Again, the relative situation of the image and altar in the old temples and modern churches is the same. This is satisfactorily seen from a painting found at Pompeii, and at this moment in the Royal Museum of Portici. (*Chamber* 8. No. DCCCXLVI.) It exhibits a female in the act of sacrificing to Bacchus. The altar is placed in front of the statue of the god, and so much below him, as to allow him to receive the full benefit of the odour of the offering. Here may be distinctly traced the present practice of fixing a figure of our Saviour, the Virgin, or a saint, above the altar at which the priest performs mass, and during the celebration of which the incense from time to time is made to rise like an exhalation towards the object of reverence.

It may be further observed, that whenever the altar is made of wood, (which in small churches, and particularly in those of the country, it commonly is), a stone, about a foot

n diameter, is always let into the middle of the table. By the priests it is called the stone of consecration, and is considered emblematical of that rock on which Christ promised to build his church. As in such a case, however, the foundation of the building would have been its proper situation, and not the altar, I cannot help imagining that it is a relic of those times when burnt sacrifices were offered up, and when it was consequently necessary that the altars on which they were laid should be made of incombustible materials. Such a supposition seems the more reasonable, as it is upon this stone that the elements of the mass are at present placed.

Tripods, so constantly numbered amongst the sacred utensils of a heathen temple, and of which so many are yet preserved in museums of antiquities, I have also seen employed in a church; the purpose which they

served being to support a brasier, containing the fire from which the incense was lighted*.

Enough has been said by Dr. Middleton, on the paint and apparel which the Italians bestow on the figures of the saints, as their ancestors did on those of their gods. I will add, that the necklaces, rings, and pendants for the ears, with which the latter were bedecked, (*Plin. N. H.* 33. 1—9. 35.) are now lavished on the former with equal profusion. Indeed, the excess of rings seems, if possible, to be greater than in the days of Pliny; and that hand would now be thought but sparingly arrayed, which had not more than three fingers loaded with such ornaments.

Again, the practice of drawing curtains before these figures, to create in the people a mysterious awe, had its commencement in Pagan times. Thus we read in the 2d Book

* This coincidence I should not have thought it worth while to remark, had it not been the custom in other Catholic countries, (as indeed it generally is in Italy and Sicily), to light the censers in the sacristy.

of Kings (*ch.* xxiii. 7.) "of the women who wove hangings for the groves," which is explained by some of the commentators, with apparent reason, to mean 'curtains spread before the idol of the grove for the purpose of procuring it respect:' '*Cortinæ prætensæ Idolo luci reverentiæ conciliandæ gratiâ.*" In the temple which the poet proposes to raise to Augustus on the banks of the Mincius, the curtain before the shrine forms a part of its decorations.

Jam nunc solemnes ducere pompas
Ad delubra juvat, cæsosque videre juvencos:
Vel scena ut versis discedat frontibus, utque
Purpurea intexti tollant aulæa Britanni.

GEORG. iii. 25.

E'en now I view the long processions near,
The opening temple, and the weltering steer;
Then turn, and mark the shifting scene, and hail
The Briton lifting high th' embroider'd veil.

"For the delubrum, (to use the words of Bishop Hurd, in his commentary on this pas-

sage, and certainly he appears to me to give the true interpretation of it), denotes the sanctuary wherein the statue of the presiding god was placed; and this was inclosed and shut up on all sides by doors of curious carved work and ductile veils, embellished by the rich embroidery of flowers, animals, or human figures." Moreover, Clemens Alexandrinus, in describing the magnificence of the Egyptian temples, fails not to mention this feature. "The Egyptians," says he, "have temples, and porticoes, and vestibules, and groves, splendidly ornamented. The walls glitter with foreign stones, worked with unrivalled cunning. Their chapels are brilliant with silver and gold and amber, and with all kinds of sparkling pebbles from India and Æthiopia. The shrines too are concealed by curtains embroidered with gold." (*Vide Spencer de Leg. Hebr.* iii. 1.) There is every reason to suppose that the Egyptian temples did not

greatly differ in the style of their furniture from those of Italy; the latter country having derived a great part of her mythology, and many of her religious rites, from the people of the Nile.

> Nos in templa tuam Romana recepimus Isin.
> In Roman temples Isis dwells enshrined.

It may be added, that figures are generally wrought in embroidery on the hangings of the Italian churches.

I shall conclude this chapter with the mention of one circumstance more relating to the temples of the Romans, which has been imitated by their descendants with the greatest propriety. It is that of their being kept open during many hours every day; a custom admirably calculated to preserve alive an attention to religious duties, and a spirit of devotion in mankind; and which cannot but be acceptable to that Being who unfolds not the gates of the heavenly temple for limited pe-

riods, but "all the day long stretches out his hand to a disobedient and gainsaying people." From earliest dawn till noon an Italian or Sicilian church stands 'with portals wide.' It is then closed for about three hours, after which it continues open till Ave Maria or sunset, and sometimes considerably later.

Such too was the practice in ancient Italy. For as all the properties and habits of men were assigned by the heathens to their gods, that of reposing at mid-day was amongst the number. Hence was it unlawful to enter the temples at that hour, lest their slumbers should be disturbed. (*Callimach. Lavacr. Pallad.* 72. *Edit. Spanhemii*). Hence the goatherd in Theocritus ventures not to play upon his pipe at noon, from fear of awaking Pan. (*Idyll.* i. 15.) Hence too the peculiar force of the derision with which Elijah addressed the priests of Baal: "And it came to pass, that *at noon* Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud, for he is a god: either he is

talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or *peradventure he sleepeth and must be awakened.*" Accordingly we read that those prophets did not despair of rousing their god, and inducing him to declare himself till 'the time of evening sacrifice.' At that hour the period allowed for repose had terminated; and when he still continued deaf to their cries, then, and not till then, their cause became altogether hopeless.

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE RELIGIOUS SERVICES AND CEREMONIES OF THE ITALIANS AND SICILIANS.

AMONGST the vast variety of objects which attract the attention of a Protestant stranger upon entering a church during the celebration of mass, that of boys in attendance upon the officiating priest does not fail to be in the number. A custom so manifestly derived from heathen times has not escaped the notice of Dr. Middleton. In this instance, therefore, as in many others, I found the observations which I had to make anticipated by that learned writer. At the same time, I cannot refrain from the mention of a picture found at Herculaneum, which proves more satisfactorily than an incidental passage from a poet, the existence and circum-

stances of such a practice. In this painting, (*Chamber* 7. MLXXVIII.) a boy wearing a white tunic, which descends to his knees, bears in one hand a dish with the offering, and in the other a wreath of flowers, which the priest is about to receive and present to the god.

The boy who now ministers at the altar in the churches of Italy has the same dress and the same office, with this exception only, that he must be prepared to supply books and censers instead of oblations and chaplets. Indeed, the costume of the present clergy exhibits a striking resemblance to that of some of the sacerdotal orders of old Rome. In the *Stanza dei Sacrifizii* of the museum at Naples, there is a small bronze image representing a 'Sacerdotum minister.' He has an upper garment descending to his middle, which answers exactly to that now worn by the priests, under the name of the 'mozzetta;' whilst beneath and below it is a petticoat, as

directly corresponding with their 'sottana.' It may be remarked, that the cassock of the protestant church is an imitation of this more ancient article of clerical dress.

The first and most important of the religious services of the Romans was sacrifice. The first and most important of the religious services of their posterity is the mass. This too is a sacrifice, and is accordingly termed Sacrifizio della Messa. The victim which was the subject of the former was called Hostia; the wafer which is the subject of the latter is called Ostia also: and yet so little does the import of the term seem attended to by the Italians, that it is used as the common name for letter-wafers, and may be seen labelled on the box which contains them in any stationer's shop in Rome. For those who are curious in tracing the progress of language, I will here mention an advertisement for a sale by auction which I noticed on a wall at Milan: it was expressed thus,—'Asta dei mobili;' the people

themselves having no more notion why 'Asta' should signify an auction, than why 'Ostia' should signify a wafer. But this by the way.

Before the commencement of high-mass (or the Messa Cantata, as it is called) the priest, standing in front of the altar, takes in his hand the aspersorio, and sprinkles the holy water with which it is filled, towards the congregation: after this he proceeds to the performance of the rite.

Such, too, was the ceremony which accompanied a sacrifice amongst the old Romans:

> Spargite me lymphis; carmenque recentibus aris
> Tibia Mygdoniis libet eburna cadis.
>
> *Propert.* iv. 6, 7.

> The water sprinkle—wake the pipe divine,
> Whilst drip the altars with Mygdonian wine.

In the high-mass, and in other offices of his church, the priest employs such modulations of voice as amount to a simple chant. That this was also the case in the services of the ancients is ascertained by a picture found at

Herculaneum, and, like those I have already mentioned, exhibited at Portici. (*Chamber* 12. No. CCI.) It expresses a sacrifice to Ibis; a priest addressing himself to the congregation; and a second person at the same time regulating his tones by the sound of a pipe. Hence that frequent application of the word 'cantare' to the ministers of the Pagan worship:

Musarum sacerdos
Virginibus puerisque canto.

Priest of the Nine, a sacred strain I sing.

The use of small bells, which are so frequently rung during the performance of mass, is not without its claim to antiquity. The sounding brass, in some shape or other, was struck in the sacred rites of the Dea Syria, (*Lucian. de Deâ Syriâ*, § 29.); and in those of Hecate. (*Theocr. Idyl.* ii. 36.) 'It was thought,' says the scholiast on Theocritus, 'to be good for all kinds of expiation and purification.' It had, moreover, some secret influence over the

spirits of the departed. (*Ov. Fast.* v. 441.) Indeed, it is probable that χαλκιον and 'æs' occurring in the passages to which I have alluded, though general expressions for a certain metal, are there intended to specify bells made of that metal: for they were instruments well known to the ancients, and employed by them, as we shall see in a subsequent chapter, for many superstitious purposes; and certainly they would have been more convenient for those rites than brass in any other shape. The sistrum, shaken by the priests in the service of the goddess Isis, was no doubt intended to have the same effect. It consisted of a frame in the figure of a battledoor, through which passed transversely several loose bars, hooked at each end, to prevent them from slipping out through the sides of the frame. These bars, when rattled to and fro, were calculated to make nearly as much disturbance as the more orthodox bells, like which, they were of brass. Amongst some

very early Christian relics deposited in the library of the Vatican I observed one of the following construction. A piece of metal, forming a handle, was beat out at the extremities into broad laminæ, and to each of these laminæ were attached four small bells. A slight turn of the wrist would thus naturally and easily put the eight bells in motion. The discovery of such an instrument is a proof that the use of them in the church is not of a modern date, and consequently comes in aid of the supposition that it owed its commencement to Pagan times*.

There is a ceremony in Italy on Ash-Wednesday which in some measure resembles one practised by the Romans. The ashes of the palm branches consecrated on Palm Sunday are kept in the churches till the first day of Lent; when the priest, taking a pinch of them between his thumb and finger, and

* The bells upon Aaron's officiating garment were of gold. *Exod.* xxviii. 33.

standing at the altar, about which all the members of his congregation kneel in turn, touches the forehead of each individual, saying, 'Memento, homo, quod pulvis es, et in pulverem reverteris.' Remember, O man, that thou art dust, and that to dust thou wilt return.

On the 15th of April, then, a festival called Fordicidia was celebrated of old at Rome; on which occasion calves were burnt in sacrifice by the senior vestal virgin, and their ashes being preserved in the Temple of Vesta till the Pulilia on the 21st of the same month, were then employed in the purification of the shepherds and their flocks. (*Ovid. Fast.* iv. v. 633*.)

Though it may be here thought a little out of place, yet I take this opportunity, lest a better should not occur, to mention a festival at the beginning of January, celebrated in honour of a certain sprite called Beffana, a

* There was a Jewish rite similar to this. *Levit.* xix. 9.

corruption, no doubt, of the word Epiphania. On its vigil the young folks of an Italian family hang up a stocking in one of the rooms before they retire to bed. This, when they are gone, their friends fill with cakes, comfits, and other dolci. On awaking in the morning the children lose no time in paying a visit to the stocking; and its contents are supposed to be presents to them from the Beffana, who has descended in the night, and proportioned her gifts to their previous good or bad behaviour. I should add, that the orgies of this supernatural personage are celebrated as soon as it grows dark, by parties dressed in burlesque costumes running about the town—(it was in Florence that I witnessed the scene)—with torches in their hands, singing, shouting, and blowing glass-horns. Sometimes again they mount carts adorned with boughs, and glaring with flambeaux; and, without sparing either the horse in the shafts, or the crowd in the streets, they drive furiously over the pavement the greater part of the night.

This Beffana appears to be heir at law of a certain heathen goddess called Strenia, who presided over the new-year's gifts, 'Strenæ,' from which, indeed, she derived her name. (*D. Augustin. de Civit. Dei*, lib. iv. c. 16.) Her presents were of the same description as those of the Beffana—figs, dates, and honey. (*Ov. Fast.* i. 185.) Moreover her solemnities were vigorously opposed by the early Christians on account of their noisy, riotous, and licentious character. (Vide *Rosini, ed. Dempster.* lib. i. c. 13, *de Deâ Strenîâ.*)

The taste which the inhabitants of Italy formerly possessed for religious processions, is not by any means decreased. To mention one example out of a thousand, of the manner in which they are conducted. On the day of the Ascension I happened to be passing near the Temple of Concord at Rome, when my ears were struck by the sound of distant music. Presently I saw a procession filing through the Forum towards the Capitol in the following order. First, a few soldiers

in very gay attire; then a priest carrying before him a relic of the Virgin, (a lock of her hair, if I remember right); then the Madonna herself, borne on the shoulders of several men, and encompassed with candles; next a numerous body of mendicant monks, walking in pairs; then a military band, playing a waltz; then a banner, painted with figures of saints; finally, a few more divisions of Franciscans, together with large crucifixes and other sacred symbols. We have here the music, the tapers, the succession of images, and the companies of attendants, which distinguished the old Roman processions in the city and the circus. I should add, that the streets through which it passed were adorned, as is usual upon such occasions, with a profusion of hanging tapestry; a custom probably derived also from ancient Rome; at least it is mentioned by Juvenal as taking place at the public festival of a marriage:

Ornatas paulo ante fores, pendentia linquit
Vela domûs, et adhuc virides in limine ramos.
Sat. vi. 227.

She quits the nuptial roof, while yet are seen
The boughs that graced her entrance, fresh and green;
While yet the sheets of tapestry remain,
Which waved their honours for the bridal train.

The boughs too of which the poet here speaks are still in fashion, festoons of them being carried sometimes across the street, and sometimes over the great entrance door of the church which lays claim to the honours of the day.

On the reverse of a bronze medal of Caligula such a garland may be remarked decorating the front of a temple, near which the priests are preparing a victim for the altar. And it may be further observed, that architecture has copied in stone these wreaths as an ornament for a frieze.

The object too of religious spectacles is now frequently the very same as it was heretofore. And as in seasons of drought the

Virgin is carried in procession for rain, so did the Romans, under the like circumstances, parade about a certain stone, called the Lapis Manalis, which was kept in the Temple of Mars on the outside the Porta Capena.

On days of popular joy the Romans were accustomed to decree to their gods a Lectisternium; whereupon their statues were taken down from their pedestals and laid upon couches before the altars, which were loaded with offerings. It is not improbable that this ceremony has been in some degree preserved in the festivals of the saints; when their figures, after having been carried in procession, are often deposited on a bench in the naves of their respective churches, where they remain several days, during which the people make their prayers and oblations.

Again, the familiarity with which the Romans treated the effigies of their gods is not less remarkable with respect to those of our

Saviour and the saints, in the present Italians and Sicilians. I have seen them expostulate with an image in a church in a half whisper, with as much emphasis and expression as if an answer had been forthwith expected to have issued from its lips.

In like manner it is recorded of Caligula, 'that he conversed in secret with Jupiter Capitolinus, sometimes whispering, and listening in his turn; sometimes audibly, and in terms of reproach: for he was overheard to threaten that he would send him about his business to Greece; until softened by the entreaties of the g l, and invited, as he declared, to an intimacy with him, he built a bridge which connected his palace with the Capitol.' (*Sueton. Calig.* 22.) It is to a custom of this kind generally prevailing in the approaches of the Romans to their gods, that so much of the second satire of Persius alludes:

Non tu prece poscis emaci
Quæ nisi seductis nequeas committere Divis.
Haud cuivis promptum est, murmurque humilesque susurros
Tollere de templis.

It is not yours, with mercenary prayers,
To ask of heaven, what you would die with shame,
Unless you drew the gods aside, to name.

Gifford.

And again still more explicitly:

Hoc igitur quo tu Jovis aurem impellere tentas,
Dic agedum Stajo—Pro! Jupiter! o bone, clamet,
Jupiter! at sese non clamet Jupiter ipse?

Good! now move
The suit to Staius, late preferr'd to Jove:
'O Jove! good Jove!' he cries, o'erwhelm'd with shame,
And must not Jove himself, 'O Jove!' exclaim?

Gifford.

Nor is this all. When disappointed by his tutelary saints, an Italian or Sicilian will sometimes proceed so far, as to heap reproaches, curses, and even blows, on the wax, wood, or stone, which represents them. The same turbulent gusts of passion displayed themselves in the same way amongst the Romans, who scrupled not to accuse their

gods of injustice, and to express their indignation against their faithless protectors by the most unequivocal signs:

> Injustos rabidis pulsare querelis
> Cælicolas solamen erat. *Stat. Sylv.* v. 22.

> To him who smarts beneath the heavenly rod,
> Some comfort is it to reproach the god.

Upon the death of Germanicus stones were cast by the populace at the temples in Rome; the altars were overturned, and in some instances the Lares thrown into the streets. (*Sueton. Calig.* 5.) And Augustus thought proper to take his revenge upon Neptune for the loss of one of his fleets, by not allowing his image to be carried in procession at the Circensian games which followed. (*Suet. Aug.* 16.)

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE MENDICANT MONKS.

I AM not fanciful enough to imagine that a regular system of monkery can by any ingenuity be proved to have existed in the classical ages; but this I think I may venture to assert, without fear of contradiction, that many distinguishing features of the present mendicant orders are primarily derived from the priests of Isis and Serapis. That such resemblance between these two descriptions of persons should exist, will seem less remarkable when we recollect that the country to which the worship of Isis and Serapis peculiarly belonged, was that in which the monastic life originated, and that this happened before divine honours had ceased to be paid to those Egyptian deities. It was about the

middle of the third century, when the Decian persecution compelled many of the inhabitants of Egypt to fly for shelter to the deserts and mountains, that monachism is considered to have commenced, (*Bingham*, b. vii. c. 1.); and it was not till the year 391 that the temple of Serapis (who was the same as Osiris) was destroyed at Alexandria. (*Lardner*, vol. viii. p. 448.) It would be a great mistake to suppose that the religious mendicant orders were first established by their great patron S. Francis. It is true that he remodelled them, enjoining certain regulations, and correcting certain abuses; but they were in themselves perhaps the earliest of all. A class of such persons existed in Italy before the foundation of the Benedictins in the year 531, under the name of Gyrovagi. And even at so remote a period as the year 390 we find Libanius, in his speech for the temples, making mention of them. "Those black-garbed people," says he, "eat more than elephants,

and demand a large quantity of liquor from the public, which sends them drink for their chantings; but they conceal their luxury by a pale and artificial countenance." The observation which Lardner makes upon this invective is much to our purpose; that the "ground of charging the monks with demanding liquor for their hymns, might have been the practice of some heathen priests." (Vol. viii. p. 444.) No doubt it was: neither is it matter of surprise that these Christians, adopting a course of life in many respects similar to that of the Egyptian priests, (as will be shown in the sequel,) should have taken advantage of institutions already established by the latter, and long familiar to the people. It is the less wonderful, as we know for certain that the religious rites offered to Isis, Osiris, or Serapis, were tolerated by the Christians with more patience than those of any other deities. "The city of Serapis," says Libanius, "celebrates the Nile, and persuades

him to rise and inundate the fields, which he would refuse to do unless the proper ceremonies were duly performed; a truth of which the Christians seem sensible: and though willing enough to abolish such rites in general, yet do they not abolish these, but permit the river to enjoy his ancient respect for the sake of the benefit he affords." (*Lardner*, vol. viii. p. 448.) That the Christians should have entertained a less hostile disposition towards the worshippers of Isis than towards many other idolaters, may perhaps be imputed to the rules of temperance by which they were bound. 'That goddess,' says Plutarch, 'commands those initiated in her rites to live in constant moderation, and in abstinence from much meat, and from sensual pleasures, to the intent that they may the better endure a rigorous and severe service in her temples.' (*De Is. et Osir.* § β.) It is unnecessary for me to notice how singularly these restrictions accord with those of monastic institutions.

The priests of Isis, again, like the mendicant monks, were supported by the charity or credulity of the public. At six in the morning they opened their temple, and having performed their religious duties, they dispersed to beg with the sistrum in their hands till two in the afternoon, when they returned to the evening service of their divinity, after which the temple was closed. (Vide *Vossius de Idolatr.* ix. 12.) The practice of the mendicant monks is at this day almost the same. And as heretofore there were few persons bold enough to repel from the door one of these consecrated beggars, who, by rattling his sistrum, at once indicated his approach and his errand,—

> Ecquis ita est audax ut limine cogat abire
> Jactantem Phariâ tinnula sistra manu?
>
> *Ovid. Ex Pont.* 1. 1. 38.

> Who from his door dares chase the Pharian band,
> The sistrum tinkling in th' insatiate hand?

so are there now numbers amongst the poor

who would think it an act of dangerous consequences to turn a deaf ear to the craving Franciscan, whilst he shakes his alms-box, and solicits charity for the souls in purgatory, the church, or the Madonna.

Further; of all the monasteries in Italy and Sicily, none so much abound with relics to captivate the vulgar as those of the mendicant orders. This too was a stratagem to which the priests of Isis had recourse in the same degree; and the reason is manifest, the superstitious regard of the common people was to be conciliated by them for the same purpose as it is now to be courted by their successors, for a maintenance. Thus it was given out, that Isis gathered up the fourteen pieces into which her husband's body had been torn by Typhon, and that she buried each of them separately in the spot where it was found; a circumstance which served to explain the variety of places of burial assigned to Osiris in Egypt. 'Some,

however,' adds Plutarch, 'do not assent to this account; affirming, that having made several images, she distributed them amongst all the cities as the real body, that he might receive divine honours from a greater portion of votaries, and that in case Typhon should search for the tomb, he might be misled.' (*Plutarch. de Is. et Osir.* ιη.) The same treatise also informs us, that these priests 'declared the bodies of other gods to be deposited with them, and preserved by their care, but that their souls glittered in the heavens like stars.' (κ.)

There are yet other points of resemblance. The priests of Isis derived much profit from the cures wrought by their divinity on credulous invalids. To this end it was not unusual for them to take possession of such natural advantages as were afforded by a medicinal or hot spring. Thus from the number of small baths and apartments which surround it, there is every reason to conclude

that the temple of Serapis at Puzzuoli was once an hospital, and was probably erected there on account of the warm and mineral waters which the place produces. The ministering priests would ascribe these good effects to the interference of their god; votive tablets would be suspended in his temple, and his servants be enriched by the bounty of the patients.

Now, to say nothing of the multitude of cures reputed to have been effected by the saints of the friars, I remember an establishment at Sciacca in Sicily of exactly the same description as that of Serapis at Puzzuoli. Having already had occasion to advert to it, I shall now merely add, that in a mountain adjacent to that town there is a cavern twelve or fourteen yards deep, out of which issues a prodigious volume of natural hot vapour. It is furnished with seats of great antiquity, calculated for the accommodation of persons desirous of undergoing such perspiration as a

temperature of 101° Fahrenheit is likely to promote. Seven idle and ignorant mendicants, calling themselves hermits, but in fact not at all differing from their Franciscan brethren, inhabit a convent above the grotto, and avail themselves of the profits arising from the invalids who resort there for relief. The chapel of this fraternity I entered, and found suspended near the altar of S. Calogero, their patron, a profusion of arms, legs, and other members, in wax, denoting the cures which had been wrought there, and the gratitude of the parties who had experienced the benefit. Thus does it appear, that in the present instance S. Calogero acts the part of Isis or Serapis, and that the mendicant friar inculcates the same tale, and for the same purpose, as the mendicant heathen priest his prototype.

Finally, the costume of these monks in several respects accords with that of the ministers of the Egyptian deities.

In the chamber of the young Apollo in the Vatican is a bas-relief, representing a priest of Isis, clad in a manner singularly like a Franciscan. A cowl covers the back of his head, which is shaven in front, and a loose cloak descends to his knees. It is true that the materials of their dress were not the same; that of the priests having been always of linen, whilst that of the monks is of wool. Sandals, again, an article of dress worn by the Egyptian priest, are still retained by the mendicant monk; though in this, as in the last instance, the material is changed. (*Herod.* β. § 36.) The tonsure of the servants of Isis and Serapis is also strictly adhered to, and a ring only of hair is left to surround a shorn and naked crown. This absurd practice seems to have given offence in the very early ages of the church, upon the score of being an acknowledged imitation of these Pagan priests. 'It is clear,' says S. Jerome, 'that we ought not to be seen with our heads shaven like the

priests and worshippers of Isis and Serapis, nor, on the other hand, to suffer the hair to grow luxuriously long, after the manner of soldiers and barbarians'—(*Bingham*, vi. c. 4.) —a caution which I cannot help thinking Jerome applies in consequence of the tonsure having then crept into the church: though I am aware that persons, from whose opinion I should always dissent with the greatest hesitation, hold it rather to have been a simple affirmation that such a custom ought not to be followed. Certain it is, that it was become universal in the West (for in the East it is still unknown) as early as the fifth century, and therefore it might well be supposed to have already commenced in the time of that ancient father.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF SACRED DRAMAS.

Most persons, when they witness the sacred dramas which are acted during Lent, will, I think, feel convinced that a spectacle so contrary to good taste and Christian decency, must owe its origin to pagan times. At Naples I have seen advertisements on the walls, that, on a certain night which was named, there would be represented at one theatre, the 'Murder of the Innocents,' at another, the 'Sacrifice of Abraham;' whilst enormous pictures, a good deal resembling those in front of our wild-beast or mountebank shows, illustrated these respective subjects, and attracted the attention of the public. It may not be unseasonable to give a brief outline of the plot of one of these religious

operas, as an example of their general character, and of the disgusting manner in which truth and fiction are mingled together in them. It is one of which I was a spectator, and it bore for its title, 'Moses in Egypt.' The piece opened with the plague of darkness, in the midst of which were sitting Pharaoh, his son (whom the writer is pleased to call Osiris), and his wife Amalthea. The queen, who has less obstinacy than her husband, is desirous of delivering her country at once both of plagues and Israelites; and is consequently complimented by the great Lawgiver with the courteous appellation of 'Gentile Donna.' The prince, on the other hand, being deeply engaged in a private amour with one Elcia, a young and beautiful Jewess, feels equally anxious to detain the descendants of Jacob. The arguments, however, and influence of the queen prevail. Moses and Aaron are summoned to attend, and forthwith make their appearance in cos-

tumes of divers colours, and, of course, with beards of a most venerable length. The former on his knees addresses a prayer to Heaven, waves his wand, and restores light to Egypt. They then sing a duet together, and are succeeded by Pharaoh, Amalthea, and Osiris, who perform a trio. Osiris now holds an interview of love with Elcia, and of politics with his friend and adviser Mambre. By means of arguments which this counsellor suggests to him, he brings about a change of mind in his royal father. Moses again shakes his rod, and a storm of thunder and hail ensues, accompanied by showers of sparks, which descend from the ceiling, in imitation, it is presumed, of "that fire which ran along the ground." All are in consternation. Meanwhile the crafty prince, aware that this new calamity must a second time subdue the inflexibility of the king, determines at all events to secure his favourite, and accordingly conducts her by torch-light to a

subterraneous vault, where she is to remain till he can find a convenient opportunity to remove himself and her from the court to the woods and pastures; where, it seems, he proposes to lead the life of a 'semplice pastore,' one to which his capacity appears very well suited. Aaron, however, is quickly at his heels, pursues them into the vault, and brings back Elcia to light, and to her countrywomen, who are now preparing for departure to the sound of very sprightly music. Again Pharaoh retracts his word, and is threatened in vain by Moses with the death of the first born. Osiris laughs the menace to scorn, and with unsheathed sword rushes on the Prophet. The latter exclaims, '*Io non ti temo ;*'—at the same moment a ball of burning tow, intended for a thunderbolt, is launched at the prince from the top of the scene, and kills him on the spot: and now Elcia throws herself upon the corpse, bewails her unhappy lot, invokes the furies of Avernus to spend their rage

upon her, and gains some vapid consolation from a certain young lady called Amenofi, a sister of Aaron. The last act exhibits Moses dividing the Red Sea; the children of Israel passing through it; the subsequent overthrow of their pursuers: and with the production of some immense masses of black pasteboard towards Egypt, to represent the pillar of cloud, and a large oval illuminated reflector towards the Israelites, to express the pillar of fire, this absurd and indecent spectacle was concluded.

It is the opinion of Voltaire that the Italians received these mysteries, as they are called, from Constantinople, where the Greek plays of the old tragedians continued to be acted for several centuries after Christ. To supplant such profane exhibitions, Gregory of Nazianzum, in the fourth century, with a temporising spirit which too much prevailed at that period, and which sowed the seeds of so many abuses in the church, deter-

mined to introduce dramatic stories derived from the Old and New Testament. Of these one is still extant, entitled Χριστος πασχων, or Christ's Passion, valuable as being a cento of verses collected from the Greek tragic poets, by which some true readings in the originals have been preserved. The characters in it are the Virgin, our Saviour, Joseph of Arimathea, Mary Magdalen, Pilate, John, a Nuncius, the synagogue, a chorus of women, and some others. It is expressly declared in the argument that it was written in imitation of Euripides; and that it was the first time the Virgin Mary had been brought upon the stage. In the course of the play, there is the same kind of deviation from the history contained in the sacred text, as is so remarkable in the mysteries of the present day. Thus S. John, in recounting to the Virgin the manner in which the soldier pierced our Saviour's side, lest embellishment should be wanting, proceeds to state, that having committed that act of atrocity,

"he ran and fell prostrate before the cross; that he smote his breast, and grasped the earth where his spear was standing stained with the blood which had issued from the wound. Finally, that he collected the dripping gore, and endeavoured to purify himself by anointing his eyes with it."

Warton mentions another instance of a sacred drama of a still earlier date; in all probability about the times immediately succeeding the destruction of Jerusalem. (*Hist. of English Poetry*, vol. ii.) It is written in Greek iambics by one Ezekiel, styled the tragic poet of the Jews, and many fragments of it are preserved in Eusebius. (*Lib.* ix. 28, 29.) It bears the title of the Εξαγωγη, or Departure of the Israelites from Egypt. The principal speakers are God, Moses, and a Nuncius. The narrative, however, adheres pretty closely to that of the Bible, although the Nuncius, in describing the passage of the Red Sea, informs his hearers, "that Pharaoh

disposed his infantry in the centre; that on each side of them he left room for the chariots of war; and that each wing consisted of horse." Moreover, on another occasion, the same loquacious messenger talks to Moses about a very singular bird, "nearly twice as long as an eagle, with variegated wings and purple breast," which had been discovered on the march.

From the date as well as the character of these plays, it is perfectly clear that they at least were borrowed from the heathen drama. And whether the Italians received such compositions through the medium of Constantinople, or drew them directly from their own ancient theatre, is a matter of no importance. They were at any rate well prepared to acknowledge the legitimacy of them; for the Roman, no less than the Grecian stage, abounded with adventures of the gods. Witness the Amphitryo of Plautus, in which Jupiter and Mercury display a variety of feats

little becoming the nature of beings so exalted. Amongst the several rules which Horace lays down for the regulation of stage compositions, that by which a restriction is imposed on the indiscriminate introduction of deities amongst the dramatis personæ, is not omitted.

Happily for the interests of religion, these mysteries, though once so common in England, have been now long abolished. To me, I confess, it does not appear at all unreasonable, to assign such profane spectacles as one amongst many causes which tended to excite and cherish that horrid mockery of every thing sacred, which distinguished the progress of the French revolution. The minds of men accustomed to identify, to a certain extent, the characters of holy writ with the persons of, perhaps, a ridiculous, and probably, a licentious company of players, would be well adapted for the reception of the jests and

scoffs of infidelity, however abominable they might be.

That they are still retained in Italy and other Catholic countries which have derived them from thence, arises, in my opinion, out of the dramatic nature of the Roman Catholic ceremonies themselves. In Italy there has ever been a certain connexion between the theatre and the church. The union was formed when plays were for the first time represented at Rome under a vain expectation of suppressing a pestilence and appeasing the anger of heaven. (*Liv.* vii. § 2.) It was strengthened by the part they continued to bear in the festivals of the gods; and it has been prolonged by that insatiable thirst of the people, whether in the solemnities of worship, or the frivolities of amusement, for the gratification of sense; and I cannot but add, that this same taste, whilst it leads the Italian to contemplate the material form under which his saints, his Virgin, his Saviour,

his God himself are represented, nay often caricatured, and disposes him to indulge in a scenic parade of processions and robes and ecclesiastical ornaments, seems to withdraw his attention from the spirituality of religion, and to familiarise him too much with subjects which ought never to be approached but with reverence and awe.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE DRAMATIC NATURE OF THE CEREMONIES OF THE CHURCH OF ITALY.

THE remarks which I had to offer on the mysteries naturally led me to the consideration of a subject which I have thought it better to reserve for a separate chapter. It is this:—the general resemblance in spirit and character which is observable in the worship of the ancient and modern Italians, as distinguished by its anthropomorphism in both cases.

With the observations that I have to make on this head I might properly enough have commenced the foregoing series of essays, all of which have had a relation, near or remote, to the religion of Italy and Sicily. Antecedently, however, to the detail of distinct facts and coincidences, which it has been the busi-

ness of these dissertations to produce, any comprehensive view of the two systems would have failed to excite, in the mind of an unprepared reader, that attention to which it has a claim. As it is, it will serve, if I mistake not, still further to illustrate my argument, by showing that not only certain practices in use amongst their ancestors have descended unchanged to the Italians, but that the feelings which prompted them have also operated in the formation of the ritual of Rome.

That which distinguished the ceremonies of pagan worship more than any other point, was the dramatic character they possessed. Calculated frequently to represent to the senses circumstances in the reputed lives of the gods, they addressed themselves to the eye and ear rather than to the understanding and heart. Thus, in reference to the danger which Jupiter incurred at his birth from his father Saturn, and to the means by which he escaped, the Corybantes were provided with

cymbals, which they duly played at the festival of Cybele. Here was a scenic effect given to the worship. Venus was believed to have a particular influence over the sea, which she could tranquillize at her pleasure, and in which she delighted to take her pastime. It was not enough, however, in the honours paid her, to pray that her power might be exercised over that unruly element, and that her presence might subdue its rage; but her image must be stripped of its necklaces and ornaments and apparel, and be then bathed. Here again was scenic effect. The ancients reckoned Pan or Faunus a rural Deity, that sported at random amongst the woods and mountains and sheep-folds; not contented, however, with courting his aid on occasions when it was thought of importance, they instituted a company of men to personify him by running naked about the streets. Here again was scenic effect. The worship of the mother of the gods was brought into Rome

from Phrygia. The Romans could not, however, offer up to her those adorations of the heart which the fountain of every thing they held sacred deserved; nor could they simply express their gratitude for having been made acquainted with her being and attributes. There was nothing which came home to the senses in all this. Accordingly, at her festival it appears to have been usual for parties of friends to quit their own house and invade that of their neighbours, where they caroused and made merry; whilst the latter returned the compliment by taking the like unceremonious possession of the quarters of their assailants. Here, as the poet observes, was a representation of that change of abode which Cybele experienced when she quitted Ida for the capital of Italy. (*Ovid. Fast.* iv. 335.) In short, here was dramatic effect.

Neither was it in the *ceremonies* alone of their religion that the Romans evinced that

want of spirituality. Even the attributes of their gods were exhibited to the senses in a material dress.

Thus one property of Janus was a perfect knowledge of the past and the future. Did the Romans then adore him in soul as a being possessed of such a knowledge? No. They were careful at least, in the first instance, to express the God and his prerogative by a sensible symbol, consisting of a figure with a double face. The same deity was supposed to preside over the entrance of heaven. Did the Romans satisfy themselves with imploring his favour, that they might not be excluded? Not until they had impressed upon their minds this office which he bore, by fixing a substantial and tangible key in the grasp of the image which represented him. (*Fast.* i. 125.)

Mars was the god of battles; but it was not enough to ascribe to him the direction and management of the events of war; they must place the spear in his hand, and the shield on his arm, and the helmet on his brow, before

they could bring his attributes forcibly home to their understandings.

Nay, it seems to me probable, that the nails, the wedges, the hook, and liquid lead, of which Horace speaks in his ode to the goddess Fortuna at Antium, were all figured out in solid materials, as various instruments of torture occasionally employed by that moody divinity, and which served to decorate some or other of her statues to which the poet alluded.

It is unnecessary (though it would be an extremely easy task) to enumerate more examples of the propensity which the Romans displayed to dramatise the ceremonies of their religion, and to clothe every thing relating to it in a substantial form.

The same observation then applies to the inhabitants of Italy and Sicily to this very day. Thus on the Wednesday in Passion-week, is sung in the Sistine chapel one of the famous 'Misereres.' The low and solemn and piteous tones with which it is chanted are asserted in

the 'Office for the Week,' (p. 156) to be expressive of the fear which the apostles felt when our Saviour was seized by the Jews.—Meanwhile lighted tapers are successively extinguished at long intervals, till at last one only is left burning: those which are put out indicating the base desertion of the twelve; that which remains unquenched, the exemplary constancy of the Virgin. At the conclusion of the chant a stamping is made by the cardinals and their attendants; this too is not without its meaning. It is declared to signify either the tumult with which the Jews sought our Saviour in the garden; or those convulsions of nature which accompanied his crucifixion. Here is the dramatic effect of which I have spoken.

On another day in the same week, the Pope performs the ceremony of washing the feet of thirteen pilgrims, who are dressed in white, and arranged along an elevated bench on the left side of the Sala Clementina. This act

is of course intended as a lively representation of a similar office performed by our Saviour to his Apostles. But it was not meant, I conceive, that this example should be literally followed. The object of it was simply to inculcate a general spirit of humility. This was the important lesson conveyed by our Lord's precept, "So likewise wash ye one another's feet." But then no opportunity would have been afforded for the spectacle, which by the practice of the church of Rome is exhibited to the public; and after all, it is but an equivocal proof of humble-mindedness in a sovereign pontiff, to perform a mere ceremonious ablution of a few poor men, whilst the napkin and ewer are borne for him by cardinals of, perhaps, the proudest blood in Italy.

Again, there is a remarkable service in the churches of Rome on Good Friday, called the 'Agonie." On that occasion it is the duty of the preacher to enlarge upon the

words uttered by our Saviour whilst hanging on the cross. This address occupies the three hours of the passion; during which time curtains are drawn over the windows, to create a gloom significant of that darkness which prevailed from the sixth to the ninth hour.—In all this there is much dramatic effect.

But, in fact, the ordinary mass, as it is explained in the "*Tesoro della Devozione*," a little book put into the hands of all the Italians that can read, and answering the purpose of our prayer-book, is a lively representation of the last scenes of our Saviour's life and sufferings. Thus when the priest approaches the altar, Christ's entrance into the garden is to be understood, and to the prayer which he offers there, the commencement of the mass alludes. When the priest kisses the altar, reference is made to that kiss by which our Saviour was betrayed. When he turns to the people, and repeats the "*Dominus Vobiscum*," he is representing

Christ when he turned and looked upon Peter. When he washes his hands, he figures Pilate, who declared that he washed his hands of the blood of that innocent man. When he elevates the consecrated wafer, he expresses the elevation of our Saviour on the cross. When he breaks it, he displays him expiring. These are not interpretations of mine, but are every one taken from the volume I have mentioned, sanctioned and recommended by the church of Rome. Now surely all this partakes greatly of a dramatic character.

Further, there is a very curious ceremony at Messina on the day of the Assumption. The image of the Virgin is carried about the town in procession, as if she were in search of her son. At length, when she is on the point of entering the great piazza, a figure of our Saviour is suddenly presented from a street, opposite to that by which the Virgin approaches. The latter instantly recoils in an ecstasy of surprise and joy at the meeting,

and forthwith half a dozen goldfinches are let loose from her bosom, which fly away, and are supposed to bear the glad tidings to heaven. What can be more dramatic than this?

If the modern Italians then have equalled their ancestors in rendering their religious ceremonies histrionic, neither have they been surpassed by them in the extravagant use of material forms. Thus our Saviour having said metaphorically that he had given to Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven, that saint, like Janus, is ever represented with such a substantial instrument in his hand. Simeon having told the Virgin that a sword should pierce through her soul on account of the sufferings of her Son, nothing is more common than to observe in Italy and Sicily an image or picture of the Madonna with that weapon buried in her breast. I have seen in the churches, during the forty days which our blessed Lord remained upon earth

after his resurrection, a large wax taper highly ornamented, placed near the altar. On the day of his ascension it was removed; whilst, at the same time, to render it more strikingly emblematical, five pieces of wax or wood, shaped like hearts, and fixed to it by pins, have served to represent the five wounds he received on the cross from the nails and the spear.

Again—It is not enough for the Italians to read in their Bibles the circumstances of Christ's apprehension and crucifixion—'that a band of men came to seize him, with lanterns, and torches, and weapons'—that upon Peter's denial of him 'the cock crew'—that one of the spectators of his sufferings 'took a sponge and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink'—that Joseph finally 'took the body down.' But all these particulars must be impressed upon their feelings by some material shapes. Accordingly we find the crucifixes, so numerous by the side

of the high roads, decorated with figures of a lantern, a cock, a sponge, a reed, a ladder, nay, even of pincers and spikes.

And as the death of our Saviour is the subject of symbols, so also is his birth. At Christmas may be seen, both in public places of worship and private houses, grotesque models of the stable at Bethlehem, called Presepi, curiously adorned with foil and tinsel, and branches and artificial flowers; whilst Joseph, the Virgin, the Infant, the wise men from the East, together with cows, mangers, cratches, and other appropriate furniture, are all carefully introduced.

Such has ever been the tendency of the inhabitants of Italy to embody every religious conception in some corporeal form.

CHAPTER X.

ON CHARMS.

In countries where credulity triumphs to so great an extent as in Italy and Sicily, charms would of course find very ample encouragement. The mention of some of these was unavoidable in treating of subjects which have already come under observation; others, however, yet remain unnoticed, and to these I wish to devote the present chapter.

I. Of bells, so far as they are used in the service of the mass, I have spoken; but they are in general extremely common as amulets. Hence they are hung about the necks of sheep, goats, oxen, and horses. In many instances, though not in all, the custom has no doubt survived the consciousness of its origin; and therefore the post-boys would

have some difficulty in assigning a good reason for spending their money in a collar of bells for their hacks, which are equally annoying to the animals themselves and their employers. It is true that the practice is not now confined to Italy, but, together with her religion, that country has diffused over a great part of Christendom many of her national and primitive habits, and this among the number. Certain it is, that it was familiar both to the Greeks and Romans; and (if we translate a passage in Zechariah rightly) to the Jews too. (*Zech.* xiv. 20.) In one of the fables of Phædrus the charger is described as tossing the bell about his neck—'Celsâ cervice eminens clarumque collo jactans tintinnabulum.' In the gallery of animals at the Vatican there is an elephant with a bell about his neck, in bas-relief. (No. 594.) And in the museum at Naples a large collection of bells is still preserved, of the same size and mis-shapen form as those now so universally suspended about

the necks of the oxen in Italy. The prevalence of this practice is expressly attributed by the scholiast on Aristophanes to its efficacy as a charm. (*Ran.* 944.)

Neither is the influence thus superstitiously attached of old to the sound of these instruments altogether forgotten at the present day. Thus it is usual in Italy to jingle the church bells whenever there is a thunder-storm; and upon inquiring of a peasant on one occasion the meaning of such a disturbance, I was answered, that it was done to drive away the devil, 'per cacciare il diavolo.' The bells in steeples were thus very probably introduced in part as protectors of the church from wicked spirits; and the ringing them in cases of fire, sacrilege, and other public calamities, was not perhaps to collect the populace simply, but also to avert the evil.

II. Human saliva was heretofore very generally used as a charm (*Plin. N. H.* x. 52), and was thought particularly efficacious

against the venom of poisonous animals. Pliny quotes some authorities to prove that the pernicious powers of toads and frogs may be disarmed by this means, and that serpents may be rendered innoxious by spitting into their mouths. (*N. H.* xxviii. 4.) The testimony of Varro is also cited by the naturalist to show that there were people in the Hellespont, near Pasium, who could cure the bite of snakes by their saliva. (vii. 2.)

Now it is curious that a set of men exist in Sicily to this day, called Giravoli, who profess to heal the wounds of venomous animals by their spittle. They frequent the neighbourhood of Syracuse, and, as I was informed, annually assemble in great numbers at Palazzuolo, a place at some distance from that city, on the festival of St. Paul, their patron saint. Like other empirics to be seen in Italy, they carry in their hands a serpent, an emblem of their profession, derived, without question, from remote antiquity. The figures

of Æsculapius and Hygeia are always so distinguished; for as that animal is said to be restored to youth and vigour on casting his skin, in like manner is the human body renovated and re-established by the healing art of medicine. (Vid. *Macrob. Saturnal.* i. 20.) A story was told me of two of these persons who some years ago had a quarrel at Syracuse. It seems that one of them, a native of that country, was jealous that the other, who was a stranger, should interfere with his practice; and accordingly he reported him to the magistrates as a man who knew nothing of his art. The magistrates heard them both; when it was agreed that on an appointed day they should again meet, each bringing some venomous animal by which his antagonist should be bit, in order that an opportunity might be afforded them of displaying respectively their medicinal skill. The meeting was kept. The interloper put into the bosom of the native an asp, which soon produced blood, whereupon

the latter, by the application of his own saliva, instantly healed the wound. It was now the native's turn, and he presented to his rival a little green frog, which spit in his mouth, and to all appearance killed him on the spot; when the other, out of his generosity and abundant expertness, with the same saliva which had wrought his own cure recalled his opponent to life and health.—However absurd this tale may be, yet as it was gravely repeated to me by a Syracusan, it serves to show the superstition which still prevails in favour of the charm.

It is remarkable, that in administering the rite of baptism, the priest, among other ceremonies, moistens a napkin with his own saliva, and then touches with it the eyes and nose of the child, accompanying the action by the word, 'Ephphatha.'

It was with a similar rite that Roman infants received their names on the 'Dies lustricus:'

Ecce avia et metuens Divûm matertera, cunis
Exemit puerum: frontemque atque uda labella
Infami digito et *lustralibus ante salivis*
Expiat. *Persius, Sat.* ii. 31.

Lo! from his little crib, the grandam hoar
Or aunt, well versed in superstitious lore,
Snatches the babe; in lustral spittle dips
Her middle finger, and anoints his lips
And forehead. *Gifford.*

A curious subject of inquiry here suggests itself, as to our Saviour's notions in making saliva the instrument of restoring sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf. That he used it designedly there can be no doubt; but it was with a view to demonstrate that the virtues of which that, or any such indifferent substance, was the vehicle, were not to be referred to the substance itself, (as many vainly supposed,) but to the Being who created it, and who had it in his power to convert the most contemptible of his works into means of displaying his greatness. And by what better method than this which was adopted by our Saviour could the people

have been convinced of the absolute nullity of a charm so reputed? For might he not be understood to argue practically as follows: 'You say that there is a healing power in saliva; but of saliva every individual amongst you is possessed; yet can any individual amongst you anoint the eyes of a blind man with it and restore him to sight? Or can any amongst you spit upon the ear of one who has been deaf from his birth, and create in him a new sense?' Indeed, there are many instances in which it has pleased the Almighty Governor of the universe to act in a similar manner. He seems sometimes to allow the spirits of darkness to select their own weapons, and then convinces them upon equal terms that 'the Lord he is God.' Thus it was perhaps in consequence of the serpent being an object of idolatry in Egypt, that the Deity thought fit to make that very reptile subservient to his glory. For is it not remarkable that he should have caused this

same animal to be both a blessing and a curse to his people? That he should have commissioned fiery serpents to bite them 'till they died,' and should then have commanded Moses to make a 'fiery serpent, that they who looked upon it might live?' Could there be a stronger proof given than this, that his authority over matter was absolute? or that the animal which they might have once worshipped as a god was altogether his creature, and wholly at his disposal?

The same observation applies to another circumstance in the Mosaic history. The rod was peculiarly appropriated to the purposes of magic. It was used by the sorcerers and enchanters of Pharaoh. Yet this did not prevent the Almighty from permitting his servant Moses to employ that same instrument in manifestation of his omnipotence. The magicians might throw down their wands, and by their connexion with the powers of darkness, transform them into snakes. They

might smite the water with them, and turn it into blood; they might bring up by them frogs upon the land of Egypt: but all this the wand of the great leader of Israel could perform, and more than all this. It could communicate a blessing, as well as a curse; it could remove, as well as inflict, a calamity. Pharaoh applied to his magicians to contend with Moses in producing evil; but in banishing the evil, when produced, they could yield him no assistance whatever.

And thus am I led to mention another ancient charm to which credit is yet given in Italy.

III. Nothing is more common than to see the Romans approach the confessionals, to receive a touch on the head from a wand which the father confessor holds in his hand, and which is supposed to confer some benefit on the parties.

I believe that the priests of Isis imparted a blessing in nearly the same manner; and

that such was the legitimate method of exorcism, may be argued from the way in which the companions of Ulysses describe themselves to have been restored to their natural forms:

> Spargimur innocuæ succis melioribus herbæ,
> Percutimurque caput conversæ verbere virgæ.
> *Ovid. Met.* xiv. 300.

> Sprinkled with better juice, her wand reversed
> Above our crowns, and charms with charms dispersed,
> The more she sings, we grow the more upright.
> *Sandys.*

IV. Holy water the Italians make use of as a purifying charm, and annually employ a person to go over all the rooms in their houses to sprinkle them with that element. The friars, those prescriptive instruments of superstition, are generally at hand to officiate on these occasions; which they do, muttering as they proceed, 'Sparges me hyssopo, et mundabor;'—'Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.'

A similar practice prevailed amongst the Greeks, and through them it reached the

Romans also; most of whose rites of purification were, according to Ovid (*Fast.* ii. 37), borrowed from that people. It is distinctly described in one of the pastorals of Theocritus:

καθαρῷ δὲ πυρωσατε δωμα θεειῳ
πρωτον, επειτα δ' ἁλεσσι μεμιγμενον, ὡς νενομισται,
θαλλῳ επιῤῥαινειν εστεμμενον αξλαξες ὑδωρ.
Idyl. xxiii. 94.

Then let pure brimstone purge the rooms, and bring
Clear fountain water from the sweetest spring;
This mixt with salt, with blooming olives crown'd,
(Each rite fulfilling) sprinkle o'er the ground.
Creech, altered.

The holy water too is mixed with salt.

V. A large class of amulets consists of sacred figures hung about the neck; but of these I have spoken elsewhere, and shown that little images of the gods were employed by the Romans for the same purposes. I will here therefore only add, that a magic property was of old imputed to coral, branches of which were thought eminently qualified to afford health and protection to infants. (*Plin. N. H.* xxii. 2.)

Hence it probably happens, that so many of the poorest women and children in Italy and Sicily wear necklaces of that substance to this day; and hence perhaps the use of it may have been introduced into most parts of Europe for children's rattles.

VI. Whatever may have been the cause, something mysterious seems always to have been attached to the act of sneezing. Any future evil, however, to which it might have been the prelude, was supposed to be averted by a word of good augury from a by-stander. This, like many other unintelligible notions, has descended from the Romans, (at least more immediately from them, though the same fancy prevailed amongst the Jews and Greeks,) to several modern nations. In our own, the salutation of 'God bless you' is sometimes given upon such occasions; in France, 'Dieu vous soit en aide' is not uncommon; but in Italy that of 'Viva," or 'Felicità,' is paid with the utmost scrupulousness.

Thus too it is recorded of Tiberius, that whenever he sneezed in his carriage, he exacted such a mark of attention from his companions with the most religious solicitude. (*Plin. N. H.* xxviii. 2.) And it appears probable that 'Felicitas,' (the Felicità of the Italians,) was the very expression in use among the Romans themselves. In proof of which may be adduced one of the numerous advertisements found upon the walls of Pompeii, that concludes with wishing the people good speed by this single word.

It would be an endless, and indeed an unprofitable task, to recount the various forms under which charms now present themselves in Italy; but owing to the industry with which Pliny the naturalist has recorded those of his own times, we may fairly say, that they were heretofore equally abundant. The symbol of the charm may not be the same in some cases, though in others I have shown that it is: it may once have been mugwort,

or antirrhinum, or a dead viper, (*Plin.* xxvi. § 15. xxii. § 10. xxx. § 14); and it may now be a string of beads that has touched the figure of S. Anthony, or a morsel of sandstone from the cavern of Sa. Rosolia: but the superstitious principle which endows such inefficient matter with miraculous powers is still the same. A deliverance from wicked spirits, from shipwreck, and from the perils of parturition, are the reputed advantages to be derived alike from all. Sometimes, again, one charm is substituted for another, which, however, in its application, does not at all differ from the first. Thus the Italians generally cross themselves thrice in setting out upon a journey. The Romans, on the other hand, thrice repeated some mysterious line on the same occasion; a plan which, we are told by Pliny, was first practised by J. Cæsar in consequence of an accident that had befallen him; but which in his own time had extended to an universal custom.

It occurs to me to mention in this place a religious exercise subsisting at Rome, which wears a strange appearance to a foreigner, and which is certainly a relic of the 'olden time.' Persons are to be seen every day, and all day long, climbing on their knees the Scale Sante, or Holy Stairs, reputed to be the same which heretofore led to Pilate's judgment hall, and which therefore must have been consecrated by the feet of our blessed Lord. But it is not to these stairs that the custom is confined, else it might well have been supposed that their sanctity alone was enough to account for such an observance; the same may be witnessed, though less frequently, on the lofty and steep flight of steps leading to the convent of Ara Cœli, a building which occupies the site of the once splendid and elevated temple of Jupiter Capitolinus.

Curious enough it is, that we find Julius Cæsar, on his return from Africa, after having concluded his campaign against Scipio and

Cato, approaching the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in the very same manner. It seems that his car broke down with him on the first day of his triumph; an omen which induced him to climb the steps of the Capitol on his knees, as a measure of precaution. (*Dion Cassius*, lib. xliii. 21.) Claudius, after his successful expedition against Britain, did the same thing, though no such accident had befallen him, to render it expedient in his case. But the practice of creeping upon the knees seems to have been a superstition generally prevailing amongst all classes; and it is one, amongst several expiatory rites which the credulous Roman matron is said by the satirist to have been willing to perform at the instigation of the priests of Cybele or of Isis:

Superbi
Totum regis agrum, nuda ac tremebunda cruentis
Erepet genibus. *Juv. Sat.* vi. 525.

Then see her shivering from the flood,
Crawl round the field on knees distain'd with blood.
Gifford.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD.

In the burial of the dead I have observed several points of agreement between the ancient Romans and modern Italians.

Thus the corpse is not carried to the grave in a coffin, but on a bier, clothed in white, and with the face and hands exposed. In Sicily I have seen the body of a priest borne along in his sacerdotal robes, and with the chalice trembling in his clenched hands. It is not till after the procession has arrived at the church, and the customary prayers have been pronounced over the remains of the departed, that they are inclosed in a coffin.

Heretofore then in Italy the corpse was not deposited in a coffin; and indeed, as the dead were then generally burned, it was na-

tural that no obstacle should be opposed to the immediate action of the fire. And perhaps to this origin, after all, the present practice may be attributed. Private persons were carried to the pyre in a simple white toga; magistrates and priests in the more splendid prætexta. For it was held proper that the deceased should be arrayed in that dress which reflected the greatest honour upon him while alive. (Vide *Dempster. Antiq. Rom.*)

The poor, however, are thrown into a common grave, without the smallest testimony of respect on the part of the survivors. At Naples there is a burial-ground or campo santo for the hospitals and for paupers, consisting of three hundred and sixty-six separate vaults. Each morning the large quarry of lava which closes the mouth of some one receptacle is heaved aside, and is not replaced before the approach of night. To this pit all the corpses destined for burial that day are promiscuously committed. Thus the re-

volution of a year sees them all receive their victims of death in succession; whilst an interval so considerable allows one crop to moulder and dissolve before another is laid low. I looked down into one of these chambers of mortality, and, not without some horror, saw several bodies stretched upon the ground with no other covering than a napkin round the waist, and lying in the position in which they had happened to fall.

The same unfeeling treatment manifested itself towards the poor of ancient Italy; naked came they out of their mother's womb, and naked they returned thither. Without shroud and without coffin, they were consigned, as they are now, to a common pit, ('Puticulæ, quod putescebant ibi cadavera projecta,' *Varro de Ver. Lat.* iv. 12, 12mo.) situated, as it is now, on the outside of the city walls.

In Florence, and I believe elsewhere the usage is the same; the bodies of the poor are daily collected and brought to a common

room built for the purpose. At midnight they are placed in a litter, (lettiga,) a carriage on four wheels, and are thus taken to the public cemetery without the town. The persons called mortuarii, whose business it is to collect the corpses, usually perform their gloomy service by torch-light, and may be constantly seen gliding along the streets at midnight in their white frocks, at a very unceremonious pace, with the bier on their shoulders.

These mortuarii are no doubt the vespillones of the Romans. They too were occupied with the corpses of the poor only, and derived their name 'a vespere,' the time when they carried them out.

Persons of the middle and upper classes, however, are attended to their graves by a long procession of monks and members of religious companies, who carry tapers in their hands, and as they move along sing a requiem to the departed soul. These lights

moreover are used though the funeral takes place in broad day.

Now we all know that anciently a profusion of torches accompanied the corpse; that the word 'funeral,' in fact, was derived from 'funes accensi;' 'that these were thought equally necessary though the ceremony was performed at the blaze of noon, (*Serv. ad Æn.* vi. 224); that a numerous procession was in attendance, and people to sing the nænia or dirge.

When the procession has reached the church, the bier is set down in the nave, and the officiating priest in the course of the appointed service sprinkles the body with holy water three times; a rite in all probability ensuing from that practised by the Romans, of thrice sprinkling the bystanders with the same element:

> Idem ter socios purâ circumtulit undâ
> Spargens rore levi, et ramo felicis olivæ.
>
> *Æn.* vi. 230.

> Old Chorinæus compass'd then the crew;
> And dipp'd an olive-branch in holy dew,
> Which thrice he sprinkled round.
>
> *Dryden.*

It may be remarked, that the number three on this occasion has ever retained a certain mysterious preference; and as the earth was heretofore thrice cast upon the dead to satisfy the gods below, 'injecto ter pulvere curras;' so I doubt not the same harmless, I would say affecting custom, has been preserved perhaps inadvertently in the burial-service of our own church. When the coffin is lowered, the clerk sprinkles soil upon it three several times, whilst the minister repeats the corresponding expressions, 'earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.' Every member of which sentence actually signifies the same thing; and though the beautiful effect of such a repetition may by some be thought ground enough for the use of it, yet I cannot help suspecting that these three tautological members were

introduced in order that the propitious number might not escape.

To the funeral of old succeeded the offerings made at the sepulchres to the shades of the departed. In early monuments, such, for instance, as are represented on Sicilian or Etruscan vases, a small altar for the reception of these oblations commonly stands by the side of the monumental column. I do not recollect any altars within the chambers of the tombs containing the cinerary urns at Pompeii. Of the tombs themselves, however, many are constructed in that shape, and were thus adapted for receiving sepulchral presents. To the due payment of these tokens of respect to the manes, the greatest importance was attached, and more or less expense bestowed upon them in proportion to the means of the surviving relatives.

Masses for the dead now answer the same purpose as these parentalia, from which they are doubtless derived. One definition would

apply to both: they are sacrifices of prayer and incense made at the altar for the souls of the deceased. They are more or less costly, according to the wealth or poverty of the parties; for the great, many masses are said, (that is, many sacrifices are offered); for the poor, few. Consequences of no less weight are now annexed to the celebration of masses than were formerly dependent on the gift of cakes or oxen. In some places the poor are deluded enough to pay a certain sum monthly to their priest, for the sake of insuring a ceremony after death which they hold it so serious a misfortune to want. What then is the advantage of masses? It is the price of indulgence, or a more speedy delivery from the pains of purgatory. And what was the advantage of sepulture and the funeral rites of old? A more speedy deliverance from the misery of wandering on the wrong side the Styx. The difference is inconsiderable.

Indeed, the whole doctrine of purgatory

bears a very close affinity to a doctrine of the Platonic philosophy, and may be summed up in the address of Anchises to his son:

Quin et supremo cum lumine vita reliquit:
Non tamen omne malum miseris, nec funditus omnes
Corporeæ excedunt pestes; penitusque necesse est
Multa diu concreta modis inolescere miris.
Ergo exercentur pœnis, veterumque malorum
Supplicia expendunt. Aliæ panduntur inanes
Suspensæ ad ventos: aliis sub gurgite vasto
Infectum eluitur scelus, aut exuritur igni.
Quisque suos patimur manes: exinde per amplum
Mittimur Elysium, et pauci læta arva tenemus.

Æn. vi. 735.

Nor death itself can wholly wash their stains;
But long contracted filth even in the soul remains.
The relics of inveterate vice they wear;
And spots of sin obscene in every face appear.
For this are various penances enjoin'd;
And some are hung to bleach upon the wind;
Some plunged in waters, others purged in fires,
Till all the dregs are drain'd, and all the rust expires:
All have their manes, and those manes bear:
The few, so cleansed, to these abodes repair,
And breathe, in ample fields, the soft Elysian air.

Dryden.

Again; there is a stated day in the year, the 2nd of November, which is called the

Festa dei Morti, when certain rites of purification are performed for all departed souls. On this occasion a priest, with the aspersorio and censer in his hand, walks in procession to the campo santo, singing a Miserere as he goes along. Having chosen such a situation as best commands a view of the inclosure, he offers up several prayers, agreeably to the ritual, for the dead who lie there, sprinkling the earth at the same time with holy water, and perfuming it with incense.

This ceremony clearly dates from the 'feralia' of the Romans, from which festival it principally differs in the season of its celebration; the latter having been solemnized on the 21st of February, a month which is thought to have derived its name from an old Latin word, 'februare,' signifying to purify, in allusion to this rite:

> Quia placatis sunt tempora pura sepulchris
> Tunc cum ferales præteriere dies.
>
> *Ov. Fast.* ii. 33.

At that pure season, rest th' appeased sprites,
Their tombs once hallow'd by funereal rites.

And it may be observed, that the Purification of the Virgin is commemorated as a festival by the Roman catholic church at the beginning of this month: at which season it is somewhat curious that small tapers, after having been blessed, are given by the priests to the people. These are kept in their houses as a kind of charm, and are never lighted except in cases of dangerous illness, or domestic calamity. Small torches, to which some purifying virtue was supposed to belong, appear also to have been bestowed by the ministers of old Rome upon certain individuals at least, if not upon the public in general, at this same period:

Ipse ego flaminiam poscentem februa vidi:
Februa poscenti pinea virga data est.
Ov. Fast. ii. 27.

The purifying charm a priestess sought,
For purifying charm a pine twig 's brought.

It is needless to say, that in this country we preserve the memory of the custom in the word candlemas.

Having had cause to touch upon the sale of indulgences, it is convenient to mention in this place a passage in Suetonius, which appears to me to afford some explanation of that abuse of the church of Rome. In his life of Vespasian he records several indecent plans which that emperor pursued for raising a revenue; and amongst the rest is that of selling pardons ('absolutiones' is the word used,) to culprits, whether guilty or innocent; 'nec reis, tam innoxiis quam nocentibus, absolutiones venditare cunctatus est.' (*Vespas.* 16.) Since then the pope has confessedly adopted some practices of his imperial predecessors, those pontifices maximi whose title he inherits; such, for instance, as that of offering his foot for salutation, which was first done by Diocletian, is it not possible that he may

also have followed so tempting an example in his fiscal arrangements, and have thus granted to spiritual offenders, as a spiritual prince, that release from punishment which it seems was before accorded to temporal offenders by a temporal prince?

I shall close the present chapter with one remark more, which may not be thought here altogether out of place; that a power of releasing convicts under certain circumstances, once possessed by the vestal virgins, is now a prerogative of the cardinals. If a vestal met a criminal on his way to execution, she could demand his life, provided she declared upon oath that the meeting was accidental. (*Dempster. Antiq. Rom.* lib. iii. 19.) The same privilege, I say, at this moment is vested in the cardinals; for which reason, lest they should counteract the purposes of justice, they generally keep within doors at the time that sentence is about to be inflicted.

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE AGRICULTURE OF ITALY.

In prefixing this title to the present chapter, I do not wish to create an expectation that I am about to enter upon an essay on the existing state of agriculture in Italy and Sicily in all its details. To attempt such a subject would lead me far beyond the limits that I have prescribed myself; for I have not professed to do more than record some of those points of coincidence between ancient and modern times which present themselves to the mind of a classical traveller whilst wandering in these countries. Extensive then as the subject of agriculture itself is, the points to which I allude may yet be few. Indeed, there is nothing in relations between landlord and tenant, in methods of cultivation, or in

implements used for that purpose, but what will be changed without scruple whenever convenience suggests an alteration. Now in the course of sixteen or eighteen hundred years it is probable that convenience would induce many such changes to be made. Had the countries of which I am treating been in a state of gradual improvement, it is certain that very few vestiges of ancient agricultural practices would now remain. And whoever will take the trouble of comparing the present condition of farms and farming in England, with that which existed but half a century ago, will be satisfied of the truth of this observation. In matters of religion, on the other hand, the inhabitants of Italy found themselves urged, by all the strongest passions of our nature, to hold fast the rites in which from infancy they had been brought up; so that even had not these been more numerous than any peculiarities which attached to their system of agriculture (which they were),

still it is probable that a greater proportion of them would have descended, more or less entire, to our own times.

In the north of Italy, which comprises the Austrian transalpine possessions, part of those of Sardinia, and the duchies, agriculture is far from being neglected; and the same is true of some districts in the Neapolitan dominions. But a great portion of the papal territory west of the Appennines is in a state of miserable desolation, well harmonising with the withered old age of the capital itself. The country between Sienna and Rome is meagerly peopled, generally open, sometimes, indeed, covered with wild entangled thickets; but very rarely intersected by a hedge or fence. Around the immortal city stretches in every direction the brown and bleak and forsaken Campagna; a few flocks of ragged sheep collecting a scanty subsistence upon it from furrows, which may have been made some years past, and which

since have relapsed into grass and weed; with an unprotected patch of corn occasionally presenting itself, not enough to redeem the prospect in general from the name of a desert, but sufficing to render, by its contrast and extent, as compared with the whole, sterility still more sterile. Within three miles of the capital itself the roads are as unfrequented and the landscape as joyless, as in the approach to the meanest town in the principality of Wales. The same tract of country prevails from Rome to Terracina. The Pomptine marshes, though at present more fertile than the rest, exhale, like almost the whole of the Campagna, that unwholesome air which is alike the effect and the cause of so utter a want of population. Even in Rome itself, no sooner is a street deserted by its inhabitants than it becomes subject to this scourge, however comparatively healthy it may have been before. The Lung' Ara, though consisting of excellent houses, and

built with great regularity and attention to ventilation, is an instance in point. In consequence of a constant diminution of the inhabitants of Rome, and the tendency of those which are left to press towards the centre of the city, this quarter has lost its population, and with it its salubrity. The north of Italy has small districts in which this corruption of the air is found, as in the neighbourhood of Bologna, and the plain between Alexandria and Villa Franca. It is therefore highly probable, that the cultivation and consequent population of Piedmont, Venetian Lombardy, and the duchies, prevent them from experiencing it in the same calamitous degree as the greater part of the papal states. Naples again, though so much farther south than Rome, but situated in a well-cultivated country, is exempt from this malady.

My object in thus mentioning the malaria is to show that the general appearance of Italy, under the Roman Emperors, was pretty

much the same as at this day: for if the unwholesomeness of the air can be taken as a proof of a want of cultivation (which I think it may), then the existence of the same evil to the same extent in ancient Italy, would imply a system of agriculture defective to the same degree as at present.

Pliny then, when he lays down certain rules for the purchase of lands, cautions his countrymen in the very outset against such as are situated in a corrupt air. 'Attilius Regulus,' says he, 'used to declare, that the most prolific soils with a bad atmosphere, or most sterile with a good one, are equally objectionable; that the salubrity of a country cannot always be ascertained by the complexion of the natives; for that by habit the most pestilential situations may be endured. That some districts may be healthy during one part of the year which are not so during another; but that those only should be reckoned wholesome which continue uninfected the

whole year through.' (*Plin.* xxviii. 5.) From the importance which the naturalist attaches to this caution, and from the care with which it is expressed, it seems clear that it was applicable to a large proportion of the lands which might be bought and sold in Italy.

Further, from the same author we learn, that 'many persons believed the Syrophœnician wind to be so noxious at Rome on account of its bringing with it the putrid exhalations of the Pomptine marshes.' (iii. 5.) And yet they had been drained by Appius Claudius, and again by Augustus.

Lucan, in enumerating the various calamities which make man their prey, and to glut which those who fell in the battle of Pharsalia would have sufficed, places in the first rank a 'pestilential air.' (*Lib.* 7.)

Eustace produces several authorities to prove the prevalence of the malaria in ancient Italy. From Strabo (*lib.* 5.) it appears, that the coasts of Latium were unwholesome.

From Pliny the younger, that the same was the case in some parts of Etruria. (*Lib.* v, *Ep.* 6.) From Tacitus, that the effluvia exhaled in the neighbourhood of the Collis Vaticanus actually proved fatal to persons who exposed themselves to its effects. (*Tac. Hist.* ii. 93.)

From all this it should seem that the general aspect of Italy has not undergone any very violent change. But this is not the only argument in confirmation of such a supposition.

Livy expressly mentions the deserted condition of the country once occupied by the Æqui and Volsci, and has much difficulty in reconciling it with the armies sent forth by those tribes in the days of their contests with Rome (*Liv.* v. vi. p. 169); and yet this district was not more than fifty miles from the capital.

It was a task imposed upon Virgil by Augustus, to rouse the people of Italy from the

contempt for agriculture which was every where displayed; and accordingly we hear the poet complaining that the peasants had forsaken the fields for the camp, '*Squalent abductis arva colonis.*'

We know that nearly the whole of the corn which was consumed at Rome was imported from Sardinia, Africa, and Sicily. By the last, Cicero asserts that the state was actually kept alive; a proof, by the way, that that island has greatly declined in fertility, whatever Italy may have done, though still it grows much more than enough for its own consumption. Tacitus, who expresses himself forcibly on all occasions, is on none more indignant than on the subject of the importation of corn. "It appeared," says he, "that not more food than was sufficient to support the city fifteen days remained; and it was only through the mildness of the winter, and the great mercy of the Gods, that it was preserved from extremities. Yet, by

Hercules, time was, when Italy exported corn to the most remote of her provinces. Still, however, is she not sterile; but we prefer bestowing our labour upon Africa and Egypt, and trusting the existence of the Roman people to accident and a ship." (*Annal.* xii. 43.) This was in the reign of Claudius.

It is the want of cultivation and the consequent scarcity of inhabitants, that gives occasion to the necessity of disposing pickets of soldiers at small distances along some of the principal high-roads of Italy. Not that their protection is of any very great value to the traveller, if we are to believe the rhyme,

> Sette soldati del Papa
> Non sono buoni per cavar una rapa.

But however this may be, a similar measure of precaution obtained under the emperors in the same country; and therefore, by reasoning conversely, it is a fact that would come in aid of my opinion, that the territories

of Augustus or Tiberius presented an aspect very little differing from that which is now exhibited by those of Pius VII. 'Numbers of banditti,' says Suetonius in his Life of Augustus, 'made no secret of appearing in arms under the pretence of self-defence; upon whom a check was placed, by stationing parties of soldiers in convenient positions.' (*Sueton. Octav.* 32.) The same author, in describing the events of the reign of Tiberius, informs us, 'that he paid particular attention to maintaining the peace of the country against seditious persons, highwaymen, and banditti, by increasing the number of stations for troops throughout Italy.' (*Tib.* 37.)

So much for the want of cultivation.

Again, I took notice that there are at present very few inclosures in Italy; and I suspect that anciently there were not more. For this reason it was, that the flocks were always attended by shepherds. Tityrus and Menalcas would have had something else to

do than sit under a beech-tree and blow their rustic reeds, if a want of hedges had not rendered their services indispensable to prevent the goats from straying.

So when Virgil speaks of the necessity of keeping the bulls apart from the rest of the herd, he does not depend upon a fence for the separation, but upon distance, upon a mountain, or upon a river: and in case these *natural* obstacles could not be met with, then were they to be confined in the stalls.

> Atque ideo tauros *procul* atque in sola relegant
> Pascua, post *montem oppositum, et trans flumina* lata:
> Aut intus clausos satura ad præsepia servant.
>
> *Georg.* iii. 212.

> The youthful bull must wander in the wood,
> Behind the mountain, or beyond the flood:
> Or in the stall at home his fodder find,
> Far from the charms of that alluring kind.
>
> DRYDEN.

Further, amongst the indications of spirit in a young horse, which the poet numbers up, that of rushing over the hedges which im-

prison him, is not even hinted at. He is to be leader in every enterprise; he is to brave the threatening torrent, and trust himself to the untried bridge. Surely the same animal would have been described as

> 'At one slight bound,
> High overleaping all bound,'

had any such existed.

By the laws of the twelve tables, a person arrived at years of discretion who pastured his herds at night in his neighbour's corn was subject to capital punishment; which, though not a proof, is a presumption that there were no inclosures.

Indeed, the simple fact of Terminus being exalted into a deity, and his festival annually observed with great circumspection (to say nothing of that distinguished honour which was paid him, when, to make room for the temple of Jupiter Olympius in the Capitol, the seat of every god except Terminus

was removed), is in itself strong ground for supposing that the boundaries of property were only known from memory, assisted by terminal statues, and observances renewed at stated points of time.

Tools of husbandry in Italy are in a very unimproved condition; and whilst our agriculturists are debating and determining the comparative merits of the Scotch and English ploughs, those of the Italians and Sicilians remain as rude in their construction as they were in the days of the poet of the Georgics. Instead of the double handle which belongs to those of our own country, and by means of which they may be guided with so much more precision, the single stale or '*buris*' of the Romans is invariably adopted. The '*binæ aures*' are two strips of wood attached to the share, (which also is often made of the same material), about eighteen inches long, diverging a little from each other, and inclined to the earth at a convenient angle for laying open the furrow.

There is another sort of plough in common use. It differs from the last in this, that the '*buris*' is made to have a slight inclination towards the line of draught, instead of towards the ploughman; but does not, however, deviate much from the perpendicular. From the point where it unites with the share there is a small projecting ledge, upon which the husbandman stands; maintains his position by grasping the handle; and thus is drawn along the field with a regular and equable motion. The advantage of this method of tilling arises from the depth of soil turned up by the plough, which must necessarily bury itself much lower in consequence of being so heavily weighted.

This inartificial implement is of very great antiquity. A figure of such a one drawn by a pair of dragons is preserved on the reverse of a medal of Enna in Sicily, and on some others—(*Vide Hunter's Medals, plate* xxv. *n.* 23)—though the little foot-board for the ploughman is not very distinct in these spe-

cimens, perhaps from the execution being indifferent. Hence we may possibly discover new force in the expression '*incumbere aratro;*' for when the body of the husbandman is thrown forwards, additional pressure of course is given to the point of the share; whereas in one of another construction, it would have precisely the contrary effect.

When the labour of the day is at an end, the plough is reversed; the share is made to catch upon the yoke of the animals that draw it, and with the end of the '*temo*' trailing along the ground, it is conveyed home. Who does not here recognize the '*versa jugo aratra*' of the Romans?

> Tempus erat quo versa jugo referuntur aratra.
> Ov. Fast. v. 497.
>
> What time the lab'ring hind from toil released,
> The plough reversing, yokes it to his beast.

It may be here added, that after the wheat has been sown in drills, persons are almost always employed to knock the clods to pieces

by hand, agreeably to the suggestions of the poet,

> Quid dicam, jacto qui semine cominus arva
> Insequitur, cumulosque ruit male pinguis arenæ?
> *Georg.* i. 104.

> The seed now sown, I praise the farmer's toil,
> Who breaks and scatters the reluctant soil.

These are illustrations of the classics which, if not valuable, are at least amusing; and I am persuaded that the best commentary upon half the Latin authors is afforded a careful observer by Italy itself.

I am not aware that horses were much employed for the plough in ancient Italy, nor are they still. To the patient ox that country has always owed her chief fertility.

There is another province in husbandry to which it is yet devoted, that of treading out the corn. I have seen a pair of these animals yoked to a heavy ribbed roller, which they continually drew round a circular threshing-floor. The grain was thus separated from the

chaff by the united effects of the bruises of the roller, and the trampling of the oxen.

Columella mentions the very same practice in his own times, recommending the use of the '*tribula*,' (an instrument for the same purpose, and of the same form as the roller,) whenever the number of oxen, or horses (which he prefers) was not sufficient to tread the corn out. (*Columell.* ii. 22.) It is true that the flail is not superseded by this process, nor was it heretofore; for the same agricultural author in the very next sentence speaks of its use under the name of 'fustis.'

It may here be proper to remark, that the threshing-floors of Italy are not like our own, made of oaken planks and inclosed in a building; but such is the dryness of the soil, and serenity of the climate, that some level spot of ground, free from grass and of a firm surface, having been selected, the operation itself is carried on in the open air.—Here is another vestige of ancient husbandry.

Area cum primis ingenti æquanda cylindro,
Et vertenda manu, et cretâ solidanda tenaci,
Ne subeant herbæ, neu pulvere victa fatiscat, &c.
Georg. i. 178.

Delve of convenient depth your threshing-floor;
With temper'd clay then fill and face it o'er:
And let the weighty roller run the round,
To smooth the surface of th' unequal ground;
Lest crack'd with summer heats the flooring flies,
Or sinks, and through the crannies weeds arise.
DRYDEN.

The manner of cultivating the vine in Italy, though differing from the more approved method of France, Switzerland, and Germany, is the very same as that which was in use amongst the Romans. To marry it with the maple, the elm, or the poplar, is certainly far more picturesque than to cut it down annually, and support its renovated shoots by poles of four feet long. The superiority, however, of the latter practice, with a view to the quality of the juice of the grape, is manifest from the superior excellence of the wines in the countries where it is followed;

and, indeed, the more powerful influence of the sun upon the fruit, obtained partly by its reflection from the earth upon the branches, which in this case cannot be raised much above the surface, and partly from the absence of boughs to impede its approach, could not avoid producing the most favourable consequences. The Italian, however, adheres to a usage sanctioned by his forefathers:

> Atque adultâ vitium propagine
> Altas maritat populos.'
>
> His marriageable vines
> Around the lofty bridegroom elm he twines.
>
> FRANCIS.

And who would not willingly compromise for a wine of somewhat inferior flavour, to enjoy the pleasure of seeing the fantastic branches of the vine twisting themselves about the arms of the trees which sustain them, and hanging in graceful festoons along successive avenues?

There is one advantage derived from this plan, and one by no means inconsiderable in a country possessing so little pasture land as Italy; that the foliage of the trees of the vineyard supplies a quantity of green food for the cattle. Persons mount into them and pluck off the leaves when they are sufficiently expanded, into bags; a process which has the additional merit of laying open the clusters to the sun.

It was not until I observed this practice in Italy that I understood the exact meaning of several passages in the Eclogues of Virgil.—That in the first, for instance,

> Hinc altâ sub rupe canet frondator ad auras—
>
> *Virg. Ec.* i. 57.

> While from the neighbouring rocks, with rural songs,
> The pruner's voice the pleasing dream prolongs—
>
> DRYDEN.

or that in the ninth,

> Hîc, ubi densas
> Agricolæ stringunt frondes—
>
> Where hinds are stripping the luxuriant leaves—

where the husbandmen are described as employed, not merely in dressing the vine itself, but in stripping off the leaves of the elm upon which it rested. In the line

> Semiputata tibi frondosâ vitis in ulmo est—
> *Ec.* ii. 70.
>
> Half pruned thy vine, and leafy is thy elm—

I had been accustomed to think, that the reproach of neglect was conveyed in the word, 'semiputata,' the plant had been left half-pruned; but it is no less implied in the expression 'frondosa,' which is not on this occasion an idle epithet connected with the elm, but is intended to signify that the operation of plucking the foliage from it had been disregarded, as well as that of dressing the vine.

It appears from Cato (*de Re Rusticâ*), that the purpose for which these leaves then served was the same as that for which they

are used now. 'Give to your oxen,' says he, 'the leaves of the elm, the poplar, the oak, and the fig, as long as you have them;' and he offers the same advice with respect to sheep. (*Rei Rusticæ Auctores. Ed. Lugd.* 1548, p. 33.)

It was formerly common to put the must into goat-skins. Thus tumid, tied by the four corners at the setting off of the legs, and stripped of the hair, they wore very much the appearance of well-fed sucking pigs. An excellent antique bronze figure of Silenus, sitting astride upon one of these primitive barrels, was found at Herculaneum, and is now exhibited in the Studii at Naples. I have noticed the same practice still existing in several parts of Italy. At Genoa, in particular, I remember seeing the steps of a church loaded with such receptacles for wine.

With regard to the propagation of the vine, it is effected by cuttings, that are

planted in trenches of four feet deep, into which stones have been previously thrown for the purpose of encouraging moisture about the roots. It is evident how exactly this system accords with the recommendation of the poet:

> Quæcumque premes virgulta per agros,
> Sparge fimo pingui, et multâ memor occule terrâ:
> Aut lapidem bibulum, aut squalentes infode conchas,
> Inter enim labentur aquæ.
>
> *Georg.* ii. 346.

> For what remains, in depth of earth secure
> Thy cover'd plants, and dung with hot manure;
> And shells and gravel in the ground inclose,
> For through their hollow chinks the water flows.
>
> DRYDEN.

The present method of raising the olive in Italy must not be passed over. An old tree is hewn down, and the 'ceppo,' or stock, is cut into pieces of nearly the size and shape of a mushroom, and which from that circumstance are called 'novoli;' care at the same

time is taken that a small portion of bark shall belong to each 'novolo.' These, after having been dipped in manure, are put into the earth, soon throw up shoots, are transplanted at the end of one year, and in three years are fit to form an olive-yard.

This process clears up satisfactorily, I think, a passage in the Georgics on which many comments have been made:

> Quin et caudicibus sectis, mirabile dictu,
> Truditur e sicco radix oleagina ligno.
>
> *Georg.* ii. 30.

> The stock in slices cut, and forth shall shoot,
> O passing strange! from each dry slice a root.

I shall conclude what I have to say upon the subject of agriculture, by describing the system of letting lands in Italy and Sicily, which appears to have been derived from very ancient times.

It is true that no single method is universally adopted; on the contrary, the te-

nures in those countries vary perhaps in their nature no less than in our own; but the one I am about to mention is by far the most general.

The landlord, whose passion for a town life permits him but seldom to visit his estate, appoints some trusty person, called a 'fattore,' or factor, to reside upon it with a fixed salary. It is the business of this fattore to parcel out the lands amongst the families who live upon it, assigning to each a division proportioned to the number of hands it can muster; such a division is called a 'Podere,' —the occupiers 'Contadini.' The rent is one-half of the produce, be it corn, wine, oil, maize, beans, or any other crop. The stock, as the oxen for husbandry, in the first instance is supplied by the landlord, or 'padrone,' for so he is named; if it is sold, the surplus above, or the deficit below the prime cost, is shared equally by the padrone and

contadino; if it dies, the *whole* loss is in like manner equally sustained by the two parties. Animals for feeding, as pigs, &c. are bought from a common purse, and, when killed, are common property. In stock of less value, as in fowls, eggs, &c. the landlord usually stipulates for a certain number from each podere annually. I should add, that the taxes, whatever they are to which the land is subject, are paid by the landlord alone; that he advances half the seed, half the manure which it may be necessary to buy, and is at the sole expense of repairs and improvements.—Meanwhile it is the factor's duty (and that no easy one, surrounded as he is by temptations to dishonesty, and required to detect abuses so capable of concealment), to watch over the interest of his employer, and to exact of the peasant the fair fulfilment of the conditions to which he has pledged himself.

Now we find Columella recommending to

all proprietors who did not reside upon their estates a similar disposition of them, in preference to retaining them in their own hands, and cultivating them by means of slaves. And his reason is this, that unless the landlord is on the spot to correct mis-management, the slaves 'hire out his oxen; neglect to give the flocks food; till the ground carelessly; and assert that they have sown more seed than is true.' (*Columell.* i. 8.) At the same time he advises him not to be too rigid in requiring payment of wood and other trifles, to which he had, no doubt, a legitimate claim. (i. 7.)

Again, Pliny the younger, after having mentioned in one of his epistles that he had been cheated in his rents, goes on to say, "that the only remedy was to receive them in kind instead of money; and appoint persons in whom he could confide as overseers of the crops." "Besides," adds he, "no species of rent can be more just than that

which is paid by the earth, the air, and the season." (*Plin. Ep.* ix. 37.)

Horace's little Sabine farm appears to have been cultivated upon this plan. He had a villicus, or 'fattore,' who seems to have superintended the five families of contadini, amongst whom it was parcelled out:

> Villice sylvarum, et mihi me reddentes agelli
> Quem tu fastidis, habitatum quinque focis.
> *Ep.* i. 14. 1.
>
> Steward of my woods and farm! a peaceful scene,
> Which gives me quiet, and which gives thee spleen;
> Till'd by five rustic households.

The 'fattore,' therefore, of the Italians, answers to the 'procurator,' or 'exactor,' or 'villicus,' of past times; the tenants, or 'contadini,' to the 'coloni,' or 'actores.' (*Vide Plin. Epist.* iii. 19.—ix. 37. *Columell.* i. 8.) I have not, however, been able to discover whether the moiety of the crop was the proportion formerly assigned to the landlord, nor whether in all the points of detail the ancient and modern systems coincide.

The method of gathering in kind seems also to have been established in Judea. For we may recollect, that in our Saviour's parable of the vineyard, 'the man who let it out to husbandmen,' sent a servant, not to demand payment in money, but 'to receive of the fruit.'

Before I close this chapter, it may be well to observe, that the expedient, to which the needy proprietors of Italy and Sicily now so generally resort, of forestalling their vintages by several years, and disposing of them to the best bidder, is as old as the days of Pliny the younger. (*Ep.* viii. 2.) The advantage which the British capitalist, who is 'occupying his business' in these parts of the Mediterranean as a merchant, derives from such purchases is incalculable; the necessity of a present supply, however small, particularly in countries where no credit is given, often obliging the indolent or extravagant man of fortune to sell his birth-right for

almost a mess of pottage. For, amongst other customs of their ancestors, that of demanding payment of debts on the first of every month under pain of arrest, is retained by some of the modern Italians; and I was assured by a Roman gentleman with very great feeling, that the epithet "tristes" was never more applicable to the calends than at this moment.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON THE TOWNS, HOUSES, UTENSILS, &c. OF THE ITALIANS AND SICILIANS.

THE ancient, like the modern inhabitants of Italy, ever preferred a town to a country life. The splendour of their sacrifices, the amusements of their amphitheatre and circus, the luxuries of their baths, the greetings in their market-places, have been succeeded by a magnificent mass, an opera, caffès, gambling-rooms, and a resort to the piazzas and corso. The pleasures of the city cannot be resigned for a pure air, which an Italian regards not; a prospect of vineyards and olive-groves, of mountain and valley and stream, for which he has no taste; for the chase, in which he seldom partakes; for agriculture, which he despises; or for the domestic delights to

be found within the walls of his own villa, and the circle of his own family, which he knows not how to appreciate: and yet the towns of Italy seem at no period to have worn that appearance of wealth or comfort which might have been expected from the constant and decided preference given them as places of residence. From the opportunity which the discovery and excavation of Pompeii has afforded us of ascertaining the plan upon which they were built of old, as well as the articles with which the houses were stored, many connecting links between ancient and modern times may be now accurately traced, which were but partially known before.

In the present construction of the towns in Italy and Sicily, there may in general be remarked three characteristic particulars: very narrow streets; numerous and spacious squares or piazzas; and a multitude of churches. The first, perhaps, intended as

a protection against the sun; of the other two, the one is accommodated to those public daily meetings or conversaziones, of which the Italians are so fond; the other, to that attention to religious duties, for which, as a people, they are so distinguished.

The same features present themselves in the general view of Pompeii. Its streets are not more than thirteen feet wide, two causeways included; and though a very small part of the city has been hitherto developed, yet three piazzas have been discovered, the dimensions of two of which are very considerable, and no less than five temples. It exhibits indications too of the same gregarious habits as are still conspicuous. Numerous stone benches with backs have been cleared, some situated in such a manner as to receive the breezes wafted from the sea, and some near the more bustling and lively quarter of the city-gate. If we may judge from the Strada degli Sepolchri at Syracuse,

which yet remains, cut through the rock, and affords the imagination an opportunity of amusing itself, like the Roman orator, with singling out the tomb of Archimedes, the streets of that town were not wider than those of Pompeii: whilst from the specimen of the one which passes between the temples of Jupiter Tonans and Concord at Rome, as well as from the express testimony of Juvenal, the capital itself does not seem to have been exempt from the same charge:

> Rhedarum transitus *arcto*
> Vicorum inflexu, et stantis convicia mandræ
> Eripient somnum Druso vitulisque marinis.
>
> *Sat.* iii. 236.

> The carts loud rumbling through the *narrow* way,
> The drivers' clamours at each casual stay,
> From drowsy Drusus would his slumbers take,
> And keep the calves of Proteus broad awake.
>
> GIFFORD.

In the heavy rains to which these climates are exposed, the streets, from their extreme narrowness, as well as from the inclination

which the sides are made to have towards the middle, are almost converted into canals. To meet this inconvenience, moveable wooden bridges are provided in the towns of the south of Italy and in Sicily. It may be observed that large unwieldy stepping-stones, rising a foot above the level of the pavement, answered the same purpose at Pompeii.

Again, the houses of this ancient city of Campania commonly consist of one or more cloistered courts, out of which are the entrances to the several small apartments that surround them. They do not appear in any case to have exceeded two stories, and are generally not more than one in height.

This court form then, is almost invariably preserved in the modern palaces of the same country, which differ, however, from those of Pompeii in their loftiness and magnificence. At the same time, Rome could have furnished some which in these respects might have stood in competition with the most

splendid. In Juvenal we read of the third story of a house being on fire, and it may be collected from the context, that there was at least a fourth. Moreover, the furniture which was consumed in it is a proof that galleries of pictures and statues were then as necessary an appendage to a man of wealth as they are now. Indeed, Augustus made a law against building houses in future higher than seventy Roman feet, about sixty-four English (*Vide Sueton. August.* 89. *Ed. Delph.*); a circumstance which implies that many exceeded that limit. Those of Pompeii retain perhaps somewhat of the Grecian character; the Greek houses being still, and having ever been, of small elevation.

It has long been a matter of dispute amongst antiquaries, whether glass was used by the Romans for windows. From the common employment of it for that purpose at present, and from the certainty that the substance itself was known to the ancients, and

actually served for phials, it seemed to follow that it was probable it must have been applied to the more important object of transmitting light. The fact, however, was not satisfactorily proved before the late excavations at Pompeii, when some pieces of window-glass, one of which was about eighteen inches square, were discovered. I had not an opportunity of personally examining these specimens when I was at Naples; for, together with some other curiosities, they were locked up in the receptacle of those Pompeian relics which had not then been brought under public inspection; but I was assured of the truth of the circumstance by one who had seen them, and whose veracity I had no reason to doubt. Glass, however, seems after all to have been rarely used. Shutters (*Plin. Epist.* ix. 13) or the lapis specularis, which was probably that exfoliating transparent stone now called talc, having supplied its place. Of the latter, pieces have been found

at Pompeii which have evidently served for windows. In the villages and small towns of Sicily, glass is still very sparingly substituted for shutters.

Again, the absence of hearths and chimneys in the houses in the south of Italy and in Sicily does not fail to attract the notice of a traveller coming from a country in the latitude of Great Britain. The climate certainly does not render those comforts unnecessary, for no people are more sensible to the slightest variation of temperature than the Italians; none make a more plentiful use of cloaks and warm clothing, and none would be less disposed than they to part with such means of defending themselves against the cold as they have received from their ancestors: 'for I believe that they would rather shiver than innovate. It is not, therefore, without reason a matter of surprise, that so manifest a convenience as a chimney has not been adopted.

A brasier filled with charcoal, and set in the middle of the room, or under the table whilst you dine, to emit its fumes without any tunnel to carry them off, is certainly less pleasant as well as less wholesome than a grate; but such has ever been the custom in Italy, and perhaps for that reason such it continues to be still. Not a chimney is to be found in Pompeii, but brasiers innumerable, of exactly the same form as those now in use, and some of them filled with the identical charcoal which was burning in them when the city was overwhelmed.

The method too of rendering the exhalations from these brasiers less offensive is further remarkable, because it furnishes another instance of coincidence, sugar having succeeded the bitumen which was heretofore thrown into them to create a grateful perfume, and of which a portion is preserved in the museum at Naples.

Another contrivance against the cold which

the Italians and Sicilians adopt, is to carry about with them a small vessel containing living charcoal, called a scaldina. It is in the shape of a basket, and, when used by the wealthier citizens, is of copper; the poor are satisfied with those of earthen-ware. This utensil they sometimes place before them upon the table, sometimes at their feet, or on their knees, till warmth has been communicated to all parts of the body in detail, whilst the careful housewife hangs at her waist a long bodkin, with which she stirs up from time to time the sleeping embers.

I have no doubt the 'prunæ batillum' of Horace's friend, the prætor of Fundi, was an implement of the same kind. (*Sat.* i. 5. 36.)

Further, it is usual for the Neapolitans to decorate the exterior of their houses with landscapes, and, from the general dryness of the atmosphere, they do not suffer any very rapid decay.

The very same thing was done by the citi-

zens of Pompeii, of which plentiful proof exists still in that interesting town.'

But this is not all: it was ever a source of great amusement to me to observe the doors of caffé-keepers, barbers, tailors, tradesmen, in short, of every description, surmounted by very tolerable pictures indicating their respective occupations. Thus at a surgeon and apothecary's, for instance, I have seen a series of paintings, displaying a variety of cases to which the doctor is applying his healing hand. In one, he is extracting a tooth; in another, administering an emetic; in a third, bandaging an arm or leg.

It is singular that an abundance of similar signs have been found at Pompeii and Herculaneum. Thus that of a school is exhibited in the royal museum at Portici. It represents the master in the act of flogging an unfortunate urchin, who is mounted on the back of one of his companions, whilst a second maintains firm hold of his legs, to prevent re-

sistance—(so classical is this method of flagellation!)—meanwhile his friends on the benches watch the process with evident scepticism respecting their own safety. Again, a shoemaker calls the attention of the public by a picture of himself at work; his shop filled with idlers, making their demands, and observing the progress of his labours; so ancient and respectable a claim has the cobbler's stall to the gossip of his neighbours. In short, both these and others contained such amusing histories as are often conveyed in Dutch paintings.

It may be further stated of the shops, that in form and situation those in ancient times, and those at present existing, are greatly alike. Consisting of one room without windows, but perfectly open to the street, and furnished with folding-doors, they resemble, more than any thing else to which they can be compared, an English coach-house; and as such shops as these now very commonly

stand on the right and left of the entrance-gate to a gentleman's or nobleman's house, of which they occupy the ground-front; so in some of the best mansions in Pompeii they have the very same position. Witness that of Sallust (as it is called), at the door of which is a shop for wine and oil. In truth, so many similar objects arrest the eye at Naples and Pompeii, that on a visit to the latter it is hardly possible to feel convinced that these two cities, separated in distance by only twelve miles, are separated in time by upwards of seventeen centuries; so much the same are the habits of men at every period, whilst under the influence of the same circumstances.

It certainly might have been presumed that custom-houses were established in the towns of ancient Italy, as the traveller finds to his cost they are at this day; but the fact may now be asserted with little fear of contradiction, one building apparently for that

purpose, and provided with weights of all degrees of size, having been discovered at Pompeii.

It might not have been disputed again, that bills and proclamations were posted about the streets of old in the same manner as they are now; and yet it is not without satisfaction, mingled with something like surprise at the antiquity of so obvious a custom, that we see scrawled in red characters on the walls of that disinterred city an advertisement, "that a bath and nine hundred shops*, belonging to a certain lady named Julia Felix, are to be let for five years;" "that on the 16th of May there was to be a show of gladiators in the theatre, which would be covered with a veil;" "that Numicius Pompidius Rufus was to exhibit, on the 29th of October, a combat with wild-beasts."

If again we fancy for a moment the furniture, implements, and utensils, which would

* Nongentum tabernæ.

be brought to light in our own houses and shops, supposing them to be overwhelmed, and then laid open some centuries hence, we might conjecture that many of the same description must have belonged to those of a nation so civilized as the Romans; but still it is pleasing to ascertain, from a testimony which cannot deceive us, the evidence of the relics themselves, that they had scales very little differing from our own, silver spoons, knives but no forks, grid-irons, spits, frying-pans, scissars, needles, instruments of surgery, such as knives of several forms, catheters, spatulas, hooks for extracting the dead fœtus, forceps, lancets, syringes, saws, and many more, all made of a very fine brass; that they had hammers, and picks, and compasses, and iron-crows, all of which were met with in a statuary's shop; that they had stamps which they used, as well for other purposes, as for impressing the name of its

owner on bread before it was sent to the oven. Thus on a loaf still preserved is legible, "Siligo C. Glanii," this is Caius Glanius' loaf. Many of their seals were formed in like manner of an oblong piece of metal, stamped with the letters of the motto; instruments very similar to those used in England for marking linen. Thus possessed of types and of ink, how little were the Romans removed from the discovery of the art and advantages of printing! What speculations instantly suggest themselves on the probable consequences of such an event! Whether, on account of the number of copies that would have been struck off, we should not have received all the authors of a classical date entire? Whether the dark ages, properly so called, would have existed at all? Whether the learning which the clergy monopolised, and the exclusive possession of which was the parent of so much priestcraft and so many abuses,

would not have been diffused throughout society at large, and have rendered mankind incapable of being made the dupes of such artifice? Whether the human intellect, under the operation of such favourable excitements, and the constant impulse of information accumulated through a succession of ages, would not by this time have arrived at a degree of perfection, of which we can have no idea?

Amongst the many sources of pleasure which a visit to Italy affords, I know not that any is more prolific than the opportunity it offers of thus examining more closely the ancient state of society in that country, and of introducing ourselves into the domestic circle of a race of people, whom the lapse of time and the glories of history have so splendidly consecrated; almost persuading us, against our better judgment, that such men could not have thought, and acted, and

spoke, like the beings of this nether world, amongst whom our lot has been cast. By a nearer acquaintance however with them, the spell is broken; and the more that acquaintance is improved, the more, I am convinced, shall we find that they resembled their present descendants.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE ORDINARY HABITS, FOOD, AND DRESS, OF THE ITALIANS AND SICILIANS.

When we call to mind the usual variations of fashion in all those circumstances, the consideration of which forms the subject of this chapter, we shall not wonder that so few, but rather that so many vestiges of ancient practices should still remain; particularly as some of them have no relation to climate, or to such natural causes as may be thought to have an uniform operation upon national character; and as all of them have withstood frequent shocks from the successive irruptions of transalpine strangers.

The first meal of the Romans was the prandium, for the jentaculum seems as little to have deserved that name as the

cup of 'caffè nero,' which serves for the breakfast of the modern Italians. This repast was taken at mid-day; and, therefore, precisely accords both in time and denomination with the present 'pranzo.' To dinner succeeded one or two hours' repose. Thus we read in Suetonius that Augustus was used to lie down in his clothes and shoes for a short time after having taken his refreshment at noon. (*Aug.* 78.) Pliny the younger relates the same thing of his uncle. (*Epist.* iii. 5.) Indeed, so universal was such an indulgence, that the streets of Rome were quite deserted at mid-day. Accordingly, when Catineus Labeo, a tribune, made an attack upon Q. Metellus, with a view of dragging him to the Tarpeian rock, and there inflicting summary punishment upon him, in revenge for an insult which he had offered him, this was the season purposely selected for so flagrant an outrage, because the forum was then empty. (*Plin. N. H.* vii. 44.) For

the same reason, eagles and birds of prey, which had sat inactive during the morning, at noon descended in search of food into the streets and squares. (*Plin. N. H.* x. 3.)

It is notorious, that the same habit still prevails to the same degree amongst the inhabitants of Italy and Sicily. For some time after mid-day, during the heat of summer, the shops are closed, and the keepers of them retire to rest; whilst the whole interior of a town is as tranquil as the presence of strangers, whose curiosity does not allow them to fall into the general fashion, will admit.

Neither does the custom which exists in many convents, of appointing some individual to read during dinner, want a parallel from antiquity. Pliny the younger describes such to have been his own practice, as well as that of his friend Spurinna, and his uncle the naturalist. (*Epist.* ix. 15—iii. 1.) Cornelius Nepos records the same of Atticus;

and from Sparzianus we learn, that Adrian caused plays to be represented, or poets to recite their compositions, whilst he was at dinner.

As the coolness of evening approaches, the piazzas become filled with people, who meet for conversation, and for the exercise of that easy familiarity so remarkable amongst them; whilst the Corso is crowded with carriages, moving in dull monotonous succession, till darkness and the engagements of the night oblige them to separate.

Now I suspect that this picture, with some slight alterations, is a no less faithful representation of a Roman usage. The citizens of Rome were accustomed to assemble in the forum at eve, and discuss the events which had occurred during the course of the day—

Vespertinumque pererro
Sæpe forum—

The forum oft at eve I wander through—

says Horace of himself; and he describes the character of a man more than commonly absorbed in business, by saying that he resorted to the forum in the morning, and in the evening to his house; or, in other words, that at the hours when bargains were made and causes adjudged in the forum, he was there; but that when it merely served as a place for social meeting, he thought he could employ himself more profitably at home. (*Ep.* i. 6. 20.) The lines in Juvenal,

> Quoties aulæa recondita cessant,
> Et vacuo clausoque sonant fora sola theatro,
> *Sat.* vi. 67.

> When sad and silent is the stage; and when
> In forums only lives the hum of men,

have been explained by the commentators to apply to the forum as the field of litigation: I would rather say that they refer to it as the point of evening rendezvous, to which the citizens repaired as a matter of course,

when there was no theatrical spectacle to divert their attention elsewhere.

In the amusement of the Corso it is probable that the present trains of carriages have succeeded the old lecticæ, or large sedans, still used in Italy, and yet more commonly in Sicily, under the name of 'lettige.' The same foolish vanity which led the poorer Romans to distress themselves for the sake of purchasing one of these vehicles, with a suitable number of slaves to support it, now operates upon the Italians in the establishment of a carriage. (*Vide Martial.* vi. 77.) Next to food and apparel, (if indeed these necessaries of life ought to be ranked first) is the importance of a 'vettura,' or 'legno,' and the number of them is great in proportion. Happy the man who can afford to station three or four lacqueys in thread-bare liveries, and dirty tattered white cotton stockings, on the foot-board behind! not less

happy than his ancestors, who could boast that they were supported by three instead of two pair of slaves. (*Martial.* vi. 77. 10. That the lecticæ were extremely numerous is manifest from hence, that a considerable part of the establishment of a man of fortune consisted of lecticarii; and it is a subject of complaint with Columella, that the old and infirm amongst them were sent into the country to cultivate their masters' estates. (*Columell. Præf.*) Indeed, to such an extent had the lecticæ increased under Julius Cæsar, that he confined the use of them, by a sort of sumptuary law, to certain persons and stated days. (*Suet. Aug.* 43.) These days were no doubt festivals, and from this circumstance it seems highly probable, that they were kept for the same senseless parade as the carriages of the modern Italians.

Before I dismiss the lecticæ, I will mention that in some parts of Sicily they are employed in the more melancholy, though no

less ancient service, of conveying the dead. Those, however, so appropriated, are distinguished by a death's head and cross-bones.

> Invidiosa tibi quam sit lectica, requiris?
> Non debes ferri mortuus hexaphoro.
> *Martial.* vi. 77. 10.

> Why carp at my sedan?—So born and bred,
> Ought you to have six porters?—No, not dead.

The Italians and Sicilians do not often mount on horseback for pleasure: it may be observed, however, that the amble to which they train their horses with so much care, seems to have been a pace in equal favour with the Romans. The equestrian statues of the two Balbi in the Studii at Naples, are represented as moving at this rate. Moreover, females still ride astride, like the figures in bas-relief so often seen on the old sarcophagi. However inferior, therefore, to our own that fashion may be in point of delicacy, in point of antiquity, at least, it has the advantage.

I am here led to say a few words on the curious relation which subsists between masters and servants in Italy.

Whoever has been in the Corso cannot fail to have observed, that the nurse, decked out in her gayest attire, almost always occupies one seat in the family carriage. The estimation in which her character was held amongst the old Greeks and Romans, does not seem to be yet forgot. Half servant, half confidante, she performed a principal part in the domestic politics of both those nations, and a play might as well have wanted a Nuncius as a Nutrix. But, indeed, generally, the familiarity which approximates the master and servant in Italy and Sicily is very remarkable, and cannot fail to remind those who witness it of the easy intercourse which obtained between the Romans and their slaves. I have seen a servant usher his mistress; a woman of high rank, into her own room with such expressions as might be

expected from an equal. It is not at all unusual for the master to be observed holding an idle conversation, through his carriage window, with a footman, during one of those pauses which occasionally occur in the wearisome progress about the Corso. At Rome, men who keep servants in livery seldom walk out without one or more of them in attendance; they enter into conversation with them without reserve, and are only anxious that they should march a few inches to the rear, in order to satisfy the claims of punctilio. At dinner, too, nothing is more common than for the servants in waiting to contribute their quota to the table-talk.

This system of things resembles most exactly that which prevailed amongst the Romans. They, too thought it necessary to be accompanied by a slave whenever they stepped out of their own doors; and they, too, conversed with him upon a footing of

the most unceremonious kind. The passages of classical authors, by which this free intercourse may be proved, are so numerous, that it can hardly be thought needful to mention them specifically. Thus Horace, for instance, speaks of whispering in the ear of his slave in the public streets, when struggling to liberate himself from his impertinent companion.

> Ire modo ocyus, interdum consistere, in aurem
> Dicere nescio quid puero.
>
> *Sat.* i. 9. 10.

> Impatient to discard my fop,
> One while I run, another stop,
> And whisper, as he presses near,
> Some nothing in my servant's ear.
>
> FRANCIS.

"To pass by other species of cruelty," says Macrobius, amusingly enough, "there are masters who whilst they are greedily distending themselves with the luxuries of the table, do not permit their slaves in attendance

upon them to move a lip, no, though it should be only to speak." (*Sat.* i. 11.)

Indeed, in every Latin comedy the slave uses as much freedom towards his master as any other person in the piece. Possibly the privileged fools, so long maintaining a place in the great families of England, had no other origin.

But to return.—The resort to the piazzas and Corso naturally reminds me of the caffés, which, on these occasions, are thronged with individuals, in search of coffee, ices, and liqueurs; or with such as simply wish to mix in debate with little juntos of their friends. These establishments, so essential to the happiness of a sociable Italian, and consequently abounding even in the smallest villages of Italy and Sicily, have succeeded the old Thermopolia in those countries; the number of which discovered at Pompeii, leads us to conclude that they were fre-

quented with the same avidity in the times of the Romans. That the liquids sold in them were principally warm, the name itself sufficiently indicates; but of what those liquids were composed it is not so easy a matter to determine.—From the marks of the cups, however, which still are visible on the marble slabs in some of these shops, it has been conjectured that a preparation of honey, perhaps 'mulsum,' was one.

In such scenes of unceremonious society which regularly return with a new day, plentiful opportunity is afforded of observing the forms of salutation which prevail; and, as several of these have descended from the earliest times, I shall take notice of a few of them.

That of kissing the face, though a mode of greeting amongst men not confined to the Italians, is of very ancient date with that people. Thus Catullus intended to receive

his friend Verannus on his return from abroad with this welcome—

> Visam te incolumem, audiamque Iberûm
> Narrantem loca, facta, nationes,
> Ut mos est tuus, applicansque collum,
> Jucundum os oculosque suaviabor.
>
> *Catull.* i. 9. 9.

> And I will hail thee safe and sound,
> And hear thee talk of Spanish ground,
> Its climate, cities, customs, men,
> (Thou lov'st to travel o'er again,)
> Then lock'd in brotherly embrace,
> I 'll kiss thy pleasant lip and face.

Another form of salutation employed by those of an inferior rank towards their superiors, as by children towards their elders, is that of kissing the back of the wrist.

In the Portici Museum there is a painting, found at Herculaneum, representing Theseus and the Athenian youths whom he had rescued from the Minotaur; and one of these is expressing his gratitude to his deli-

verer by a similar token of affection and respect.

A third form of salutation commonly used when the party does not stay to converse, but at the same time wishes to acquaint his friend that he recognises him, is to raise the hand and quiver the fore-finger. The same custom amongst the Romans caused this finger to be called the 'digitus salutaris.'—(*Sueton. Aug.* 80.)

I have now traced the Italian through most of his daily occupations. The history closes with the 'cena,' or supper, which, as it preserves the same name, so does it also hold the same relative importance to the other meals which was given to the old 'cœna.'

It may next be a subject of some curiosity to know in what respects the food of the modern Italians accords with that of the Romans; omitting, therefore, such articles as it is unnecessary to specify, from their being common to mankind of whatever clime or

soil, I will enumerate a few, which, without being universal, seem always to have been received by the inhabitants of Italy.

Herbs constituted an important part of the food of a Roman; dressed, it is true, (which is the case still), in such a variety of shapes, and with such admixture of sauces, as to have lost all the simplicity of that diet. Cicero, I recollect, somewhere complains bitterly of the barbarous effect produced upon his own stomach by vegetables in disguise. Endive and mallows are both mentioned by Horace as finding a principal place at his table; and I have seen them both exposed for sale in the market at Naples and Florence. The latter herb, taken as tea, is thought to have great virtue in removing colds, and when bruised is applied to wounds with no less efficacy: circumstances which heretofore, perhaps, gave them the epithet 'salubres.'

Garlic is, unhappily, as much in request with all classes of people now as it was in

the time of the same poet. His ode to Mecænas, who partook with Thestylis and the reapers in this national taste, is the only point with which I am acquainted, to redeem it from total execration. (*Epod.* iii.)

Lupins, sodden in boiling water, served as food, according to Pliny (*N. H.* xviii. 14); and at this day they are eaten by the peasants of Italy, after they have taken means to correct their extreme bitterness by first stewing and then steeping them in a succession of cold waters.

The seeds of the stone-pine were eaten by the Romans; a fact ascertained from some of them having been discovered at Pompeii, amongst other articles of food, and now exhibited in the Studii at Naples. Pinocchii too, as they are now called, are numbered by the Italians in their list of eatables, and generally make their appearance with the dessert. On the same authority we learn, that the fruit of the carruba, or ceratoria siliqua, an ever-

green tree which grows in the Neapolitan territory, but in greater abundance in Sicily, was eaten by the ancients; and, at present, the poor people roast or boil the pods, which are as large as those of the common bean, are glutinous, and possess a sweet, though far from a palatable flavour. Wild asparagus is now a very common and favourite vegetable; and in the frugal meal described by Juvenal, that herb, we may remember, collected by the bailiff's wife from the mountains, fills a dish—

Montani
Asparagi, posito quos legit villica fuso.
Sat. x. 69.

The sperage wild, which from the mountain's side
My housemaid left her spindle to provide.
GIFFORD.

The cucumis, or water-melon, was kept for a considerable part of the year, and was consumed by the less wealthy Romans in great quantities. (*Plin. N. H.* xix. 5. *vide etiam Vossium de Idol.* vi. 12.)

By a fatuity for which I never could account, the same tasteless fruit is still preferred (not merely from its comparative cheapness) by the lower classes in Italy, to the delicious produce of their gardens and vineyards, and forms a very essential article of their subsistence.

Fish was a kind of staple viand amongst the Romans, of the same importance to them as it now is to their descendants; serving, in short, in both cases, as a substitute for the more solid provisions of an English table.—Juvenal, indeed, asserts with poetical hyperbole, that the whole Tyrrhene sea was netted with such assiduity that the fry could never acquire their natural size. (*Sat.* v. 96.) The 'baccalà,' or dried cod, from Newfoundland, is now, however, the main article of consumption.

The 'pressi copia lactis,' or curd, as distinguished from cheese, of which Virgil speaks, is now carried about the streets for

sale in abundance, under the name of 'ricotta.'

Butter, on the other hand, does not appear to have been used by the Romans, except as a medicine. "It is made," says Pliny, "of milk, and is a species of food which amongst barbarous nations is in particular request, and divides the rich among them from the poor." (*N. H.* xxviii. 9.)

Nor is it yet to be met with in those parts of Italy which are not much frequented by travellers; whilst in Sicily I did not find it in a single place with the exception of Palermo and Messina, which, as maritime towns, have a constant intercourse with foreigners, and consequently do not always exhibit fair specimens of the primitive manners of the country. The excellent oil made in these quarters has ever supplied the purposes and prevented the general use of an article so essential in the culinary catalogues of the North.

There is a white wine in Italy, which, as being calculated, perhaps, to provoke an appetite, is usually drunk at the beginning of dinner, and in small quantities: it is called 'vermut,' a name of exotic growth, like many others which are now corrupting the Italian language, indicative, however, of the wormwood with which it is embittered.

This mixture seems to have been familiar to the Romans, and was denominated 'vinum absinthiten.' Columella gives a receipt for making it, from which it appears that the Aminean grape furnished the juice for it; and this too, if we may believe Servius, (*on Georg.* ii. 97) was white: '*Amineum*, quoth the etymologist, '*quasi sine minio, id est, rubore; nam album est.*" (*Columell.* xii. c. 35.)

Such are a few coincidences in the food of the ancient and modern inhabitants of Italy and Sicily.

The costume both of men and women has experienced a great revolution. Some peculiarities, however, borrowed from past times, may still be traced. The 'toga,' a species of dress which could never have been common but amongst an indolent people, has given place to a loose cloak with a cape descending below the middle, with or without sleeves. This garment, folded carelessly about the person, preserves a little of the character of the national gown of the Romans, though a closer inspection easily detects the difference.

Amongst the peasants of a country the caprices of fashion have less influence. In Italy the shepherds are still frequently clothed with goat-skins; a defence against the weather that was anciently adopted by the same class of people,

> Qui summovet Euros
> Pellibus inversis.
>
> *Juv. Sat.* xiv. 186.

'The poor, who with inverted skins, defy
The low'ring tempest, and the freezing sky.
GIFFORD.

In the neighbourhood of Fundi sandals are in general use; and, throughout the Neapolitan districts, the truncated conical hat, or pileus of the Romans, is worn by the husbandmen.

I know not whether it be worth while to mention, that the Italians, Sicilians, and indeed most nations on the shores of the Mediterranean, are supplied with coarse woollen red caps from Venice, which are in such general request, particularly amongst the seamen, that the manufacture of them constitutes a principal branch of Venetian industry. Though this fallen republic is not of classical date, yet it is possible that the epithet 'Venetus,' applied by Juvenal to the 'cucullus,' or hood, a cheap article of dress in his time, might not merely have expressed the colour, but also the country in

which the fabric subsisted (*Juv. Sat.* iii. 170); and that modern Venice may have inherited a trade anciently exercised amongst the Veneti, inhabitants of the neighbouring continent.

To support the folds of the hair at the back of the head, the Italian women still employ the 'acus' of their ancestors. It is a pin of six or eight inches long, now commonly made of steel, and tipped at each end with a large ovate polished knob. Of these knobs, which project to a considerable distance beyond the ears, the one is fixed, the other moveable at pleasure.

Many such pins are preserved amongst the relics in the museum at Naples; made however of ivory instead of steel (in these instances), and having, instead of knobs, a carved figure at one extremity, and a circular nut, which turns upon a screw, at the other. The object for which the instrument served is given in a line in Martial:

Figat acus tortas sustineatque comas.

A pin the plaited tresses to sustain.

In the neighbourhood of Mola di Gaieta it has been observed by many travellers, that the hair of the females is twisted with great care, and spirally coiled, after the manner of the old statues.

From the vast multitude of necklaces treasured up in the various antiquarian museums of Italy, and particularly in that at Naples, it should seem that these ornaments were as popular of old as at this day. Few women, however mean in appearance and condition, can be satisfied to want them; whilst their clumsy shape and size render them doubly inconvenient. In the chamber of cameos at Naples are several necklaces made of large gold or gilt balls connected together, a fashion still in very high favour.

The same observations may be made upon the use of ear-rings. The Roman ladies had pendents, called 'crotalia,' consisting of pearls

linked in such a manner as to rattle when they walked. And we read, that the absurd practice of wearing ornaments so oppressive was followed by the poorer though not less ostentatious females. (*Plin. N. H.* ix. 95.) Indeed it is manifest from the profusion of those found at Pompeii and Herculaneum, of the same cumbrous magnitude, though coarser material, that it must have been very usual to load the ears with these sonorous decorations.

In the excess of this fashion, then, the present Italian and Sicilian women have certainly never been surpassed. Nothing is more frequent than to hear the tinkle of their ear-rings as they meet you in the streets.

Amongst the Romans, men as well as women wore rings on the hand; and Pliny complains, that in consequence of the practice having become so general, a criterion by which the different orders in society might once have been distinguished was completely done away. (*Plin. N. H.* xxxiii. 1.) Possibly the circum-

stance of the ring having been used in the double capacity of ornament and seal, might have formerly given it a twofold value, and rendered it an object of less effeminacy. But though now no such importance can be attached to it, it maintains the same strange fascination over the taste of the Italian, and he will wear his ring, though his purse may not afford him the means of paying his tailor for patching his coat.

Of the cosmetics used by the females in Italy, enough has been recorded by classical authors to leave no doubt that they were as abundant under Augustus as under Pius VII. There was found, however, in the toilette of a lady of Pompeii a small crystal box of rouge, which now remains in the museum at Naples, whilst the body it was intended to adorn must have long been reduced to a powder perhaps in quantity as little as this monument of perishable vanity.

Though not falling strictly under the head

either of personal dress or ornament, yet I may be allowed to mention in this place the universality of umbrellas in Italy. Ploughmen may be seen as they go to their work carrying them in their hands, made of skins; and indeed the peasants in general, both male and female, are seldom unprovided with such as are formed of a coarse canvas, and of dimensions sufficient to cover a household. An article so essential to the comfort of persons living in such a latitude was probably alike in vogue amongst the ancient inhabitants of Italy. Martial speaks of these protectors against the violence of the sun, under the name of 'umbracula.' (xiv. 28.) And from the tenor of the theatrical and amphitheatrical advertisements discovered at Pompeii, it may be concluded, that all the spectators were expected, unless the contrary was expressed, to be prepared with umbrellas or broad hats, to defend themselves against rays at all times powerful, but acquiring additional force from

reflection on the stone benches of these places of public amusement. Hence it was one of the diversions of that unaccountable madman Caligula to roast his subjects at shows of gladiators, by causing the veil which was extended over their heads to be withdrawn without previous notice. (*Suet. Calig.* 24.)

CHAPTER XV.

MISCELLANEOUS COINCIDENCES OF CHARACTER BETWEEN THE ANCIENT AND MODERN ITALIANS.

FROM several peculiarities in the Italians considered as a nation, which cannot fail to attract the notice of a stranger, it should seem that they retain many of those features which are so prominent in the character of their ancestors.

I. Gambling, that propensity to which an idle people is ever disposed, was not more common in the days of Juvenal than now. (*Juv.* i. 88.) An exclusion from politics operating upon the upper classes, and a total want of commerce on the lower, has ever rendered all ranks in Italy prepared to cherish a vice which has at least the merit of engaging

the mind, and preventing the thoughts from becoming their own prey. Besides the tables of hazard which are introduced at routs, and at which even females do not blush publicly to risk their fortunes and their tempers; besides the legitimate gaming-houses, many of which are under the sanction of government, and contribute to its support; those amusements which in other countries, from the dexterity they require, and the interest they excite, are not thought to want the stimulus of a stake, are in Italy made vehicles of profit and loss. I have observed boys, when playing at ball, duly pay and receive at the end of each game. Nay, the beggars in the streets may be constantly seen venturing the baiochs they have gained by their day's importunities. Can we not then still exclaim in the words of the satirist,

Quando
Major avaritiæ patuit sinus, alea quando
Hos animos?

> When did fell avarice so inflame the mind?
> And when the lust of play so curse mankind?
>
> GIFFORD.

A taste which has ever been so natural to the Italians, has derived great encouragement from the pernicious system of small lotteries, which prevail in almost every town to an extent that is truly wonderful. In walking along the streets of Rome, for instance, the eye meets in every direction such advertisements as these in the shop-windows: 'Qui si guoca per Roma;' Here 's a lottery for Rome: 'Qui si guoca per Firenze;' Here 's a lottery for Florence: 'Qui si guoca per Napoli,' &c. Thus in each town is stationed one lottery-office, at least, for every other. The plan too upon which they are framed is surprisingly seductive. Out of ninety tickets which are put into the wheel, five only are drawn; the purchaser of one of these five receives fifteen times his stake, be it more or less. If he stakes upon two numbers, as a combination,

and both happen to be drawn, he receives two hundred and seventy times his stake; but nothing, if one of them only turns up. If upon three numbers, as a combination, he gets five thousand times his stake, supposing him fortunate. Neither is hope suffered to build its airy castles for two or three months previous to the drawing, as in England; but within a few days after the purchase of the ticket its fate is determined, when the adventurer may be induced to improve his success or repair his disaster by another trial. The evil effects of these lotteries are further increased by the very small as well as the more serious sums which it is permitted to risk in them. I have purchased a ticket for eight baiochs, or about four-pence. A temptation is thus held out to the lower classes, which they find it impossible to resist.

Now whether this incentive to gambling existed of old in Italy I am not able positively to say; it appears however not improbable

that it did, and that from thence it subsequently passed into other countries. According to Evelyn, lotteries were brought into England from Venice in the reign of Charles II. (*Evelyn's Memoirs.*) He may be right in the place from whence they were imported here, but the period was of somewhat an earlier date. Goldoni, in his life of himself, gives the Genoese the credit of the invention; those speculating citizens having been used to gamble upon the ballot which happened twice a year for fifty senators to relieve the body who went out of office. (*Memorie di Goldoni*, vol. i. p. 197.) But however that may be, it is certain, that when the Roman emperors gave an entertainment, a lottery was often resorted to after dinner as an agreeable pastime. Accordingly we read, that Augustus sometimes sold tickets for prizes, in the value of which there was the utmost discrepancy, and that he would dispose of pictures with their faces turned towards the wall; thus

amusing himself with the satisfaction or disappointment of the parties who had purchased. (*Sueton. Aug.* 75.) Heliogabalus too had prizes of ten camels, ten flies, ten pounds of gold, ten of lead, ten eggs, provided for his guests. (*Lamprid.* 21.) I leave it to my readers to judge whether such might not have been the origin of the present state-lotteries.

There is a national game of chance in Italy, called 'morra,' which is unquestionably of great antiquity. It is played by two persons, who at the same instant stretch out any number of fingers at pleasure. It is then the business of each to guess, without hesitating or delaying in order to count them, the sum of the fingers thus extended on their united hands. Such is the zeal with which this game is conducted, that the voices of the players, as they simultaneously exclaim, 'uno,' 'due,' 'tre,' 'quattro,' &c. may be heard throughout a street; whilst numerous idlers collect

around them to witness the vicissitudes of fortune.

There cannot be a doubt that the 'micare digitis' of the Romans was the self-same amusement; and the force of their expression for an honest man, that he was one 'with whom fingers might be counted in the dark,' 'quocum micare potes in tenebris,' becomes sufficiently intelligible.

Before I dismiss this subject I will add, that allusion is frequently made in the Latin poets to a game at nuts, as one to which children were particularly attached:

Nucibus facimus quæcunque relictis. *Pers.* i. 10.

And such a game I have noticed in Italy, where the boys having piled up four or five walnuts pyramidically, withdraw a few yards, and with another take aim at the heap, which falls a prize to him who succeeds in striking and dispersing it. It is unnecessary to point

out how exactly this accords with the description by the author of the 'Nux Elegia:'

> Quatuor in nucibus non amplius alea tota est
> Cum tibi suppositis additur una tribus.
>
> In stakes of nuts the gambling boys agree,
> Three placed below, a fourth to crown the three.

II. Another characteristic which the Italians possess in common with their ancestors, is a fondness for public spectacles; 'panem et circenses.'

Amongst these there is one still followed in the capital of Italy which bears a great resemblance to an ancient amphitheatrical exhibition. Not indeed to one of those more sanguinary scenes, which the savage nature of the combatants and the trifling value set upon their lives, was calculated to produce; not to the struggle between the gladiator and the king of the forests; but to that more harmless species of contest which was sometimes waged between men and bulls. An ox is

turned into the arena of an amphitheatre, constructed nearly as of old, though formed of no other building than the mausoleum of Augustus. Some active fellows, lightly dressed, exasperate the animal by waving red flags in his face, till he is roused to pursue them, when they retreat, lay hold of the edge of the parapet which sustains the podium, and vaulting upon it, escape the fury of their pursuer. Sometimes one more intrepid than the rest watches his opportunity, throws himself exactly between the horns of the enraged beast, clings to his forehead, and in spite of all his efforts to gore him, maintains his position till liberated by his companions. To render the ox still more frantic, a man of straw is suspended from a rope stretched across the arena, upon which he often spends his rage when disappointed in his attempts to wreak his vengeance on those who have so justly provoked it. At length, when he is judged to have furnished sport enough, his tormentors

endeavour to throw a noose over his horns: if successful in their aim, they thus secure and remove him from the arena; if, on the other hand, the cast fails, they betake themselves to flight, as before, and wait for a more favourable moment.

One of the public amusements then of old Rome was, as I have already stated, nearly the same. It appears to have been introduced from Thessaly by Julius Cæsar. The combatants, it is true, were in some cases, if not always, mounted; a measure perhaps rendered necessary from the more ferocious nature of the beasts with which they had to contend, the wild bull, instead of the ox, having been then the unfortunate victim. However, they maddened the subject of their sport in the same manner, attacking and evading him by turns, and dragging his head to the earth by throwing a halter over his horns. (Vide *Sueton. Tiber.* 21. *cum notis edit. Grævii.*) Moreover Asconius, a writer of the first cen-

tury, says, that men in effigy were made of hay, and presented to the bulls, which being thus irritated, occasioned the spectator still greater diversion. (*Asconius in Orat. pro Cornelio.*) The whole scene has supplied the author of the Metamorphoses with a spirited simile:

> Haud secus exarsit quam circo taurus aperto
> Cum sua terribili petit irritamina cornu,
> Phœniceas vestes, elusaque vulnera sentit.
> *Metam.* xii. 102.

> Thus in the circus, freed from bolt and bar,
> And roused by mock provocatives to war,
> The angry bull high tosses o'er his head
> The senseless effigy and robes of red.

Another public entertainment of the Romans was the pantomime.

Whether this kind of spectacle originated amongst the Greeks, which, from a passage in Aristotle, may be suspected; 'Dancers,' says he, 'make use of rhythm alone whereby to express themselves without the aid of harmony; for by means of rhythm, accompanied

by action, they can display character, and sentiment, and subject;' (*Aristot. Poet. sub init.*); or whether, as Suidas and other writers affirm, it was the invention of Pylades and Bathillus, in the reign of Augustus; (*Tac. Annal.* i. 54); certain it is, that it was pursued in Italy under the emperors with so much avidity, that the factions and feuds it created could not be composed in any other manner than by its total abolition. (*Sueton. Nero.* 16.)

The nature of it was the same as that of the ballet now exhibited on the stage of that country, and from thence adopted into our own; a drama in dumb show, in which the plot, characters, and catastrophe were developed by gesticulation and dancing, without the assistance of language as an interpreter. Thus Nero, at a time when he was labouring under a severe disease, made a vow, that if he should recover he would dance the story of Turnus in Virgil. (*Sueton. Nero.* 54.) Indeed, the vast variety of action which the

inhabitants of Italy seem in every age to have introduced into common conversation, and the struggle of unruly passions labouring for a vent, and consequently moulding the features and frame into shapes that could not fail to portray them, have rendered the Italians a nation eminently qualified for pantomimic success. The frequency of intrigue, again, has greatly tended to improve these telegraphic signals; and in Sicily, (in which island gesticulation has arrived at a higher degree of perfection than in Italy itself,) the people find little difficulty in holding an intelligible intercourse, or communicating a practicable scheme, without the intervention of a single word.

III. These effects of the operations of the mind upon the attitude and gestures of the body, cannot be too much kept in view in the perusal of the Roman authors. They serve to explain much which the frigidity of an Englishman's constitution, and his almost

utter exemption from every thing like corporeal expression of his feelings, makes him unable to comprehend. How often, and how forcibly, for instance, has the old fable of Hercules and the Waggoner been suggested to me, when I have seen an Italian or Sicilian encountering a difficulty. I felt confident that its author must have had a race of men before his eyes very strongly resembling those amongst whom I was travelling. Is their house in flames? is the buckle of their harness broke? does their mule sink in a quagmire? expressions of the most violent passion escape them without discrimination or judgment: they tear their hair; cry out upon all the saints, not excepting the Santo Diavolo himself; and, in short, do every thing but that only which a phlegmatic inhabitant of the north would content himself with doing, —flog the horse, and put the shoulder to the wheel, and depend upon his own exertions for escape.

I well recollect the time when it appeared to me a strange example of inconsistency in the poet, that he should cause the warlike Æneas to commence so many of his speeches with gushing tears ('lacrymis obortis'); but after having witnessed the facility with which even the stoutest and most manly of the Italians yield to this female weakness, I am no longer at a loss to account for Virgil, with his usual fidelity to nature, assigning that tenderness to his hero from which the bravest of his countrymen are not exempt.

IV. Again: from the meaning with which the action of the preachers in Italy, particularly the Franciscan monks, is replete, they are enabled to make themselves much more generally understood by the vast audiences sometimes assembled in their churches. Those who are more remote from the pulpit, connecting a word they may chance to catch with the laugh, the shrug, the start, the clasping of the hands, the visible appeal to

the crucifix, the elongation or contraction of the face, which seldom fails to be associated with it, find little difficulty in following a discourse that makes its way through the eye at least, if not through the ear, to the understanding—

> Intorno ascoltano i primieri,
> Le viste i più lontani almen v' han fisse.

Upon this principle, then, it is that we can account for the orators of ancient Rome producing that impression upon the multitude which they certainly did effect, though speaking in the open air from the rostra, and therefore probably heard by a comparatively small part of the crowd which was collected in the forum. Hence, too, action, that auxiliary of eloquence so little enlisted in its service in our own country, where the field for the orator is commonly confined within limits to which the voice alone is capable of extending, formed a very essential quality in the speaker of Athens and Rome, whose business it was

to address popular meetings so large, that without the aid of gesticulation it was impossible to circulate his meaning co-extensively with his hearers.

V. These observations on public speaking, which the pantomime suggested, lead me, in turn, to the subject of extempore poetry.

The improvisatore of the Italians is a person so remarkable, that it is curious to know whether he had any prototype amongst his Roman ancestors. Now that the oracles both in Italy and Greece were delivered in unpremeditated verse is sufficiently certain; as also that the 'vates,' or seers, foretold things to come in spontaneous measures. Mention is made in Cicero, of Marcius and Publicius as possessing that extraordinary faculty in great perfection. (*De Div.* i. 50.) It may be more to our purpose, however, to show, that many of the Roman youth, who had no pretensions to greater inspiration than that which their own imaginations afforded them, were,

notwithstanding, as regular improvisatori as those whose performances have justly excited so much astonishment in these later times. In the year of Rome 391, to propitiate the gods, who were believed to be afflicting the city with a grievous pestilence, recourse was had to a public dramatic spectacle. A company of Tuscans were accordingly sent for, who performed their national dances to the sound of a pipe, but without dialogue. This barbarous exhibition the young men of Rome imitated; not, however, without making an essential improvement, consisting in the addition of extempore verses, which they accompanied with suitable gestures. Such long continued to be the state of the Roman drama; resting upon the natural talent the Romans had for extempore poetry, and not reduced to a written systematic form till the time of Livius. A taste, however, so congenial to the vivacity of this people, was not to be annihilated even by a written drama; and there

were ever found, even in the most polished ages of Rome, persons who, after the ancient custom, bandied ludicrous verses with each other, called exodia, between the acts of the play, and who were not thought to receive any of that contamination from the histrionic art which excluded actors in general from a place in their tribe, or a post in the army. (*Liv.* vii. 2.)

Perhaps the poetical contests carried on between the peasants in Virgil and Theocritus may be considered less extravagant, when allowance is made for the possible possession of a faculty which in our own country the most refined and best educated cannot boast.

The empire of fancy over Italy has by nothing been more clearly proved, than by the relish for poetry which has ever been so generally diffused throughout that fairy-land. What else could have procured of old audiences for the Roman poets, who daily, in baths, gardens, palaces, and porticos, recited

and explained their compositions to the public? For it is to be recollected, that these writings were not merely such as might naturally be expected to interest a promiscuous rabble; they were not simply farces or lampoons, the rehearsal of which would in any age and nation bring a multitude of persons together; but the Thebais of Statius, the merit of which has preserved it to our own times, and which flatters no vulgar passions, is recorded to have attracted the whole of Rome, and to have been heard with peculiar delight by the attentive crowd:

> Tântâ dulcedine captos
> Afficit ille animos, tantâque libidine vulgi
> Auditur. *Juv.* vii. 85.

> When Statius fix'd a morning, to recite
> His Thebaid to the town, with what delight
> They flock'd to hear! with what fond rapture hung
> On the sweet strains, made sweeter by his tongue!
> GIFFORD.

But besides the authors themselves, there were certain individuals called 'literati,' or

'literatores,' who made it their business to explain to the public the works of the poets, whether ancient or modern. The same class of people amongst the Greeks were named 'Grammatici.' (*Sueton. de Illustr. Gramm.* 3.) Some of them confining their labours exclusively to Homer, received the appellation of 'Homeristæ,' and for the like reason there was a set of men in Italy denominated 'Ennianistæ,' their sole employment being to read and comment upon the writings of the father of Latin verse. (*Aulus Gellius*, lib. xii. c. 5.)

Though the discovery of the art of printing, and the increased pride of authorship, have abolished this method of giving publicity to new poems, yet the populace continues to gratify its poetical appetite by listening to those who make a trade of openly reciting and explaining the best poets of their country. On the quay at Naples I remember seeing a thin emaciated object reading with infinite gesticulation and emphasis the Orlando Fu-

rioso, and translating it into the Neapolitan dialect. His hearers consisted of the very lowest class, ship-porters, boatmen; in short, such motley figures as are usually encountered in a foreign sea-port. They were seated on benches round the lecturer, and were listening to a battle-piece upon which he then happened to be making his comments. It was delightful to observe the spirit with which they entered into the whole; their countenances varying with the subject, and their eyes riveted upon this animated 'literator.' In due time each paid a few grains for his seat, and still lingered to hear a continuation of the rehearsal. Hard by was another of these orators; but, less luminous than his rival, he failed to unite so large an assembly. Oral commentators of this kind are to be met with every day upon the mole; 'for the people,' said a man in the crowd, to whom I addressed myself on one of these occasions, 'cannot thoroughly understand their poets

unless they are explained to them in language with which they are familiar.' The alternative of ignorance he seemed to place entirely out of the question.

I here bring to a close an essay which has occupied the hours I could spare from other avocations, since my return to the land of my birth. In preparing it for the press I have found many delightful recollections revived; recollections, foreign indeed to the subjects of these pages, yet in my mind intimately associated with them: the purple light upon the hills—the vineyard and orange-grove—the fountain half hid with ilex—the mouldering temple—the spot where the poet sang, and the orator spoke, and the patriot fell—inconveniences surmounted—accidents escaped—kindnesses received—charities drawn forth—friendships formed or cemented by common pursuits, and common interests, and common toils, by mutual assistance, and mutual for-

bearance, and mutual concession. If it were possible that my reader could peruse the book with feelings in these respects similar to my own, I should await his verdict with greater confidence. As it is, however, I trust, that it may excite in him, if not the same, yet other associations equally pleasing; that an attempt to illustrate those authors which have been the study of his boyhood, may at least serve to carry him back to scenes of that golden age, with all its attendant mirth, and hope, and ardour, and singleness of heart: and that, appeased by the fond memory of times past, he may look with a favourable eye upon a work which has been the means of awaking that memory, and pardon the want of greater merit in the essay itself.

THE END.

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